

ANDERSON COLLEGE
LIBRARY
ANDERSON, INDIANA

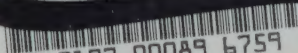
PR 4200 1927 2446
Browning, Robert
Complete poetical works of
Robert Browning

MAR 15

307723177

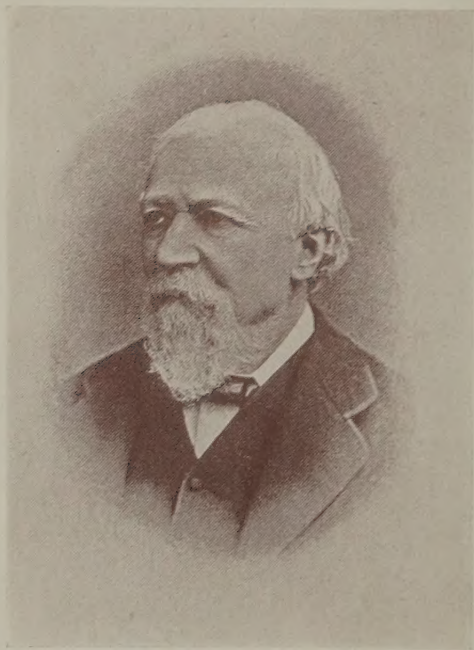
PR 4200 1927 2446
Browning, Robert
Complete poetical works of
Robert Browning

ANDERSON UNIVERSITY INAN
PR4200 1927 *24461
The complete poetical works of Robert B.



3 2197 00089 6759

Date Due



Robert Browning.

THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS OF
ROBERT BROWNING

NEW EDITION
WITH ADDITIONAL POEMS
FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1914

AMERICAN
LIBRARY
AMERICAN

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1927

All rights reserved

ANDERSON, IND.
THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS OF
ROBERT BROWNING

COPYRIGHT, 1907 and 1914,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published November, 1907. Reprinted
July, 1910; April, 1912; July, 1914.

New Edition September, 1915. Reprinted March, 1916; March, 1917;
December, 1925; July, 1927.

ANDERSON COLLEGE
LIBRARY
ANDERSON, INDIANA

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

THIS edition of Mr. Browning's poems and plays makes no pretence to be critical. One of the most useful of the Shakespearian commentators, Mr. Theobald, has observed that the science of criticism, so far as it affects an editor, is reduced to three classes: "The emendation of corrupt passages, the explanation of obscure and difficult ones, and an inquiry into the beauties and defects of composition." Happily there are no corrupt passages in Browning, but undoubtedly there are some obscure and difficult ones, although the reader will often be surprised to find how frequently obscurity and difficulty will be dissipated and removed by a careful study of the context. So, too, Browning has his beauties and defects of composition; but neither his beauties or defects of composition, nor the obscurities and difficulties of particular passages, are here discussed or explained. All that has been done is to prefix (within square brackets) to some of the plays and poems a few lines explanatory of the characters and events depicted and described, and to explain in the margin of the volumes the meaning of such words as might, if left unexplained, momentarily arrest the understanding of the reader. That some easy words have been explained and some hard ones left alone is more than likely, since, on such a subject, no standard exists either of information or of ignorance. Mr. F. G. Kenyon has been kind enough to make the notes for "The Ring and the Book," but for the rest the Editor alone is responsible.

The edition is a complete one, containing all Mr. Browning's regularly published plays and poems, from *Pauline* (1833) to *Asolando* (1889). In the arrangement of the contents a chronological order has as far as possible been observed; but as Mr. Browning himself rearranged some of his smaller poems regardless of their dates of publication, his publishers have not felt themselves at liberty in these cases to adhere to chronology. In all the poems the poet's latest readings have been followed.

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

6443

W 63160

EDITOR'S NOTE

One of the most important poems and plays in the history of literature is the *Book of Job*. It is a story of a man who is tested by God, and who, in the end, finds that his faith was justified. The story is told in a way that is both simple and profound, and it is a story that has inspired many people for centuries.

The story of Job is a story of a man who is tested by God. He is a man who is rich and powerful, and who is loved by his people. But one day, he is struck by a series of disasters, and he is left in a state of despair. He questions God, and he wonders why he is being punished. But in the end, he finds that his faith was justified, and that God was testing him to see if he was truly faithful.

The story of Job is a story of a man who is tested by God. He is a man who is rich and powerful, and who is loved by his people. But one day, he is struck by a series of disasters, and he is left in a state of despair. He questions God, and he wonders why he is being punished. But in the end, he finds that his faith was justified, and that God was testing him to see if he was truly faithful.

The story of Job is a story of a man who is tested by God. He is a man who is rich and powerful, and who is loved by his people. But one day, he is struck by a series of disasters, and he is left in a state of despair. He questions God, and he wonders why he is being punished. But in the end, he finds that his faith was justified, and that God was testing him to see if he was truly faithful.

The story of Job is a story of a man who is tested by God. He is a man who is rich and powerful, and who is loved by his people. But one day, he is struck by a series of disasters, and he is left in a state of despair. He questions God, and he wonders why he is being punished. But in the end, he finds that his faith was justified, and that God was testing him to see if he was truly faithful.

ALICE BAKER

11-11

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO MY OLD FRIEND JOHN FORSTER, GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE, HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTTEST AND STAUCHEST HELPER, SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

LONDON: *April 21, 1863.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1868.

THE poems that follow are printed in the order of their publication. The first piece in the series I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity; for not long ago I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad: by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine," which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

R. B.

LONDON: December 25, 1867.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1888.

I PRESERVE, in order to supplement it, the foregoing preface. I had thought, when compelled to include in my collected works the poem to which it refers, that the honest course would be to reprint, and leave mere literary errors unaltered. Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient: my faults remain duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where "Pauline" must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology — experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

The poems that follow are again, as before, printed in chronological order; but only so far as proves compatible with the prescribed size of each volume, which necessitates an occasional change in the distribution of its contents. Every date is subjoined as before.

R. B.

LONDON: *February 27, 1888.*

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
PAULINE: A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION	1	KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES: A TRAGEDY —	
PARACELSUS —		FIRST YEAR, 1730. —	
✓ I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES . . .	15	KING VICTOR. PART I. . .	196
II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS . . .	25	KING VICTOR. PART II. . .	201
III. PARACELSUS	33	SECOND YEAR, 1731. —	
IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES . . .	46	KING CHARLES. PART I. . .	208
V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS . . .	54	KING CHARLES. PART II. . .	214
NOTE	65	DRAMATIC LYRICS —	
STRAFFORD: A TRAGEDY —		CAVALIER TUNES —	
ACT I.		I. MARCHING ALONG . . .	219
SCENE I. A HOUSE NEAR WHITEHALL	70	II. GIVE A ROUSE	219
SCENE II. WHITEHALL	74	III. BOOT AND SADDLE . . .	219
ACT II.		THE LOST LEADER	220
SCENE I. A HOUSE NEAR WHITEHALL	78	"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"	220
SCENE II. WHITEHALL	80	THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD- EL-KADR	221
ACT III.		NATIONALITY IN DRINKS . . .	222
SCENE I. OPPOSITE WESTMIN- STER HALL	84	GARDEN FANCIES —	
SCENE II. WHITEHALL	85	I. THE FLOWER'S NAME . . .	222
SCENE III. THE ANTECHAM- BER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS	89	II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURG- ENSIS	223
ACT IV.		SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER	224
SCENE I. WHITEHALL	90	THE LABORATORY	225
SCENE II. A PASSAGE AD- JOINING WEST- MINSTER HALL	92	THE CONFESSIONAL	226
SCENE III. WHITEHALL	95	CRISTINA	226
ACT V.		THE LOST MISTRESS	227
SCENE I. WHITEHALL	97	EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES . . .	227
SCENE II. THE TOWER	97	MEETING AT NIGHT	228
SORDELLO —		PARTING AT MORNING	228
DEDICATION	103	SONG	228
BOOK THE FIRST	103	A WOMAN'S LAST WORD . . .	228
BOOK THE SECOND	114	EVELYN HOPE	229
BOOK THE THIRD	126	LOVE AMONG THE RUINS . . .	229
BOOK THE FOURTH	138	A LOVERS' QUARREL	230
BOOK THE FIFTH	151	UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY	232
BOOK THE SIXTH	163	A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S . . .	233
PIPPA PASSES: A DRAMA —		OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE . .	234
INTRODUCTION	174	"DE GUSTIBUS —"	238
I. MORNING	177	HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD	239
II. NOON	182	HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA	239
III. EVENING	187	SAUL	239
IV. NIGHT	191	MY STAR	245
		BY THE FIRE-SIDE	245
		ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND . .	249
		TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA	250

PAGE

DRAMATIC LYRICS — *Continued.*

MISCONCEPTIONS	251
A SERENADE AT THE VILLA	251
ONE WAY OF LOVE	252
ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE	252
A PRETTY WOMAN	253
RESPECTABILITY	254
LOVE IN A LIFE	254
LIFE IN A LOVE	254
IN THREE DAYS	254
IN A YEAR	255
WOMEN AND ROSES	256
BEFORE	256
AFTER	257
THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL	257
MEMORABILLA	258
POPULARITY	258
MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA	259

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES:
A TRAGEDY —

ACT I.	262
ACT II.	267
ACT III.	272
ACT IV.	276
ACT V.	281

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON:
A TRAGEDY —

ACT I.	
SCENE I. THE INTERIOR OF A LODGE IN LORD TRESH- AM'S PARK	287
SCENE II. A SALOON IN THE MANSION	288
SCENE III. MILDRED'S CHAM- BER	291
ACT II.	
SCENE. THE LIBRARY	294
ACT III.	
SCENE I. THE END OF THE YEW-TREE AVE- NUE UNDER MIL- DRED'S WINDOW	300
SCENE II. MILDRED'S CHAM- BER	303

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY:
A PLAY —

ACT I. MORNING.	
SCENE. A CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE AUDIENCE- CHAMBER	306
ACT II. NOON.	
SCENE. THE PRESENCE-CHAM- BER	311

PAGE

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY — *Continued*

ACT III. AFTERNOON.	
SCENE. THE VESTIBULE	316
ACT IV. EVENING.	
SCENE. AN ANTECHAMBER	321
ACT V. NIGHT.	
SCENE. THE HALL	327

DRAMATIC ROMANCES —

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP	333
THE PATRIOT	333
MY LAST DUCHESS	334
COUNT GISMOND	334
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL	336
INSTANS TYRANNUS	337
MESMERISM	338
THE GLOVE	339
TIME'S REVENGES	341
THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND	342
THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY	343
IN A GONDOLA	346
WARING	348
THE TWINS	351
A LIGHT WOMAN	351
THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER	352
THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN: A CHILD'S STORY	353
THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS	356
A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL	366
THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY	368
HOLY-CROSS DAY	369
PROTUS	371
THE STATUE AND THE BUST	372
PORPHYRIA'S LOVER	375
"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"	375

LURIA: A TRAGEDY —

ACT I. MORNING	379
ACT II. NOON	384
ACT III. AFTERNOON	388
ACT IV. EVENING	393
ACT V. NIGHT	397

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY —

ACT I.	402
ACT II.	407

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EAS-
TER-DAY —

CHRISTMAS-EVE	415
EASTER-DAY	428

MEN AND WOMEN —

"TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS"	438
HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPO- RARY	438

	PAGE
MEN AND WOMEN — <i>Continued.</i>	
ARTEMIS PROLOGISES	440
AN EPISTLE CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN	441
JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION	445
PICTOR IGNOTUS	445
FRA LIPPO LIPPI	446
ANDREA DEL SARTO (CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER")	451
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH	454
BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY	456
CLEON	467
RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI	471
ONE WORD MORE	472

IN A BALCONY 475

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ —

JAMES LEE'S WIFE —	
I. JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW	487
II. BY THE FIRESIDE	487
III. IN THE DOORWAY	487
IV. ALONG THE BEACH	488
V. ON THE CLIFF	488
VI. READING A BOOK UNDER THE CLIFF	489
VII. AMONG THE ROCKS	490
VIII. BESIDE THE DRAWING- BOARD	490
IX. ON DECK	491
GOLD HAIR: A STORY OF PORNIC	491
THE WORST OF IT	493
DIS ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS	495
TOO LATE	497
ABT VOGLER	499
RABBI BEN EZRA	501
A DEATH IN THE DESERT	503
CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND	512
CONFESSIONS	516
MAY AND DEATH	516
DEAF AND DUMB: A GROUP BY WOOLNER	516
PROSPICE	516
EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS: A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON	517
YOUTH AND ART	517
A FACE	518
A LIKENESS	518

	PAGE
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ — <i>Continued.</i>	
MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM"	519
APPARENT FAILURE	538
EPILOGUE	539
BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE	541
ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY	575
THE RING AND THE BOOK —	
I. THE RING AND THE BOOK	649
II. HALF-ROME	667
III. THE OTHER HALF-ROME	685
IV. TERTIUM QUID	706
V. COUNT GUIDO FRANCESCHINI	726
VI. GIUSEPPE CAPONSACCHI	752
VII. POMPIIIA	779
VIII. DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE ARCHANGELIS	802
IX. JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOT- TINIUS	822
X. THE POPE	840
XI. GUIDO	866
XII. THE BOOK AND THE RING	896
PRINCE HOHENSTIEL- SCHWANGAU, SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY	907
FIFINE AT THE FAIR	932
RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY, OR TURF AND TOWERS	973
THE INN ALBUM	1022
PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DIS- TEMPER, ET CETERA —	
PROLOGUE	1060
OF PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DIS- TEMPER	1060
AT THE "MERMAID"	1066
HOUSE	1068
SHOP	1068
PISGAH-SIGHTS. I.	1070
PISGAH-SIGHTS. II.	1070
FEARS AND SCRUPLES	1071
NATURAL MAGIC	1071
MAGICAL NATURE	1072
BIFURCATION	1072
NUMPHOLEPTOS	1072
APPEARANCES	1074

	PAGE
PACCHIARO TO — <i>Continued.</i>	
ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER	1075
HERVE RIEL	1076
A FORGIVENESS	1078
CENCIAJA	1083
FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL	1086
EPILOGUE	1091

THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆS- CHYLUS	1095
--	------

LA SAISIAZ	1122
----------------------	------

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC	1133
------------------------------------	------

DRAMATIC IDYLS: FIRST SERIES —

MARTIN RELPH	1153
PHEIDIPPIDES	1156
HALBERT AND HOB	1158
IVÁN IVÁNOVITCH	1159
TRAY	1166
NED BRATTS	1166

DRAMATIC IDYLS: SECOND SERIES —

ECHETLOS	1173
CLIVE	1173
MULÉYKEH	1178
PIETRO OF ABANO	1180
DOCTOR —	1187
PAN AND LUNA	1191

JOCOSERIA —

"WANTING IS — WHAT?"	1194
DONALD	1194
SOLOMON AND BALKIS	1197
CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI	1198
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI	1199
ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE	1200
IXION	1200
JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH	1202
NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE	1215
PAMBO	1215

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES —

PROLOGUE	1217
THE EAGLE	1217
THE MELON-SELLER	1218
SHAH ABBAS	1219
THE FAMILY	1221
THE SUN	1222
MIHRAB SHAH	1224
A CAMEL-DRIVER	1226
TWO CAMELS	1228
CHERRIES	1229

	PAGE
FERISHTAH'S FANCIES — <i>Continued.</i>	
PLOT-CULTURE	1231
A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR	1232
A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE- EATING	1234
EPILOGUE	1240

PARLEYINGS WITH CER- TAIN PEOPLE OF IMPOR- TANCE IN THEIR DAY —

APOLLO AND THE FATES: A PRO- LOGUE	1241
WITH BERNARD DE MANDE- VILLE	1246
WITH DANIEL BARTOLI	1251
WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART	1256
WITH GEORGE BUBB DODING- TON	1259
WITH FRANCIS FURINI	1264
WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE	1271
WITH CHARLES AVISON	1277
FUST AND HIS FRIENDS: AN EPILOGUE	1283

ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS —

PROLOGUE	1293
ROSNY	1294
DUBIETY	1294
NOW	1294
HUMILITY	1295
POETICS	1295
SUMMUM BONUM	1295
A PEARL, A GIRL	1295
SPECULATIVE	1295
WHITE WITCHCRAFT	1295
BAD DREAMS. I.	1296
BAD DREAMS. II.	1296
BAD DREAMS. III.	1297
BAD DREAMS. IV.	1297
INAPPREHENSIVENESS	1297
WHICH?	1298
THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG	1298
THE POPE AND THE NET	1299
THE BEAN-FEAST	1299
MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG	1300
ARCADES AMBO	1301
THE LADY AND THE PAINTER	1301
PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE	1301
BEATRICE SIGNORINI	1304
FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN AC- COMPANIMENT	1308
"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST —"	1310
DEVELOPMENT	1312
REPHAN	1314
REVERIE	1315
EPILOGUE	1317

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS	1319
---	------

APPENDIX

OF THE BROWNING MSS. BY SIR FREDERIC G. KENYON, K.C.B., LL.D.	1323
---	------

POEMS BY ROBERT BROWNING

	PAGE		PAGE
THE FIRST-BORN OF EGYPT (1826)	1327	SONNET TO RAWDON BROWN (1883)	1335
THE DANCE OF DEATH (1826)	1328	GOLDONI (1883)	1335
NOTE ON "THE EARLIEST POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING" BY BERTRAM DOBELL	1329	TRANSLATION FROM HORACE "ON SINGERS" (1883)	1336
SONNET (1834)		GEROUSIOS OINOS (1883)	1336
" Eyes calm beside thee (Lady, could'st thou know !) "	1331	THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST (T. ARTHUR CHAPPELL) (1884)	1337
A FOREST THOUGHT (1837)	1331	THE NAMES (TO SHAKESPEARE) (1884)	1337
THE "MOSES" OF MICHAEL ANGELO (1850)	1332	WHY I AM A LIBERAL (1885)	1337
BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM (1854)	1332	LINES FOR THE TOMB OF LEVI LINCOLN THAXTER (1885)	1338
ON BEING DEFIED TO EXPRESS IN A HEXAMETER: "YOU OUGHT TO SIT ON THE SAFETY-VALVE" (1866)	1333	EPPS (1886)	
LINES TO THE MEMORY OF HIS PARENTS (1866)	1333	With a note by Edmund Gosse, C.B., LL.D.	1338
A ROUND ROBIN		LINES ON FELIX MOSCHELES' PAINTING, "THE ISLE'S ENCHANTRESS" (1889)	1339
Written by Robert Browning and sent to Miss Hosmer in Rome (1869)	1333	ÆSCHYLUS' SOLILOQUY: AN UNFINISHED DRAFT OF A POEM	1339
HELEN'S TOWER (1870)	1334	JOAN OF ARC AND THE KING-FISHER	1340
"OH LOVE, LOVE" (1879)	1334	A SCENE IN THE BUILDING OF THE INQUISITORS AT ANTWERP	1341
VERSES FROM "THE HOUR WILL COME" (1879)		REPLY TO A TELEGRAPHIC GREETING	1341
"The blind man to the maiden said "	1334	REPLIES TO CHALLENGES TO RHYME	1341
TRANSLATION FROM PINDAR'S SEVENTH OLYMPIAN (1883)		DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER	1341
"And to these Rhodians she, the sharp-eyed one." With letter addressed to the Editor of the <i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>	1335	THE DOGMA TRIUMPHANT: "EPIGRAM ON THE VOLUNTARY IMPRISONMENT OF THE POPE AS PROVING HIS INFALLIBILITY"	1341

MISS ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT'S CRITICISMS ON SOME OF HER FUTURE HUSBAND'S POEMS (1845)	1341	ROBERT BROWNING'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING SOME OF HIS POEMS. BY A. ALLEN BROCKINGTON	1350
--	------	--	------

INDEX TO FIRST LINES OF SHORTER POEMS AND SONGS	1353
---	------

GENERAL INDEX	1357
-------------------------	------

PAULINE.

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

1833.

[Browning was twenty years old when this Fragment was first published. Amongst the early works of great poets it must always occupy a distinguished place on account of the splendour and extreme beauty of many of its passages. As a rule, such early work is disappointing, or at all events insignificant and uninteresting, but "Pauline" is far from insignificant, and is always interesting. One sees a mind at work and a rich promise of a harvest to come. The story of the young Rossetti transcribing the whole poem from the copy in the British Museum is a literary anecdote always worth recording. Mr. Browning himself seems to have thought lightly of the poem, and in giving one of his own copies to Mr. Frederick Locker spoke of it as a literary curiosity only. In his later days he became a very severe critic of the life and conduct of Shelley, and did not care to be too frequently reminded of his boyish raptures for that strange and unaccountable being. It would be difficult and unprofitable to attempt to analyse "Pauline," the charm of which now consists in detached passages. It is the sole survivor of a great deal of Browning's youthful verse. In a copy recently sold, and formerly belonging to Mr. Crampon, is an autograph note from the Author, recording "that the poem was written in pursuance of a foolish plan I forget or have no wish to remember, involving the assumption of several distinct characters;" whilst in a copy of his own he wrote, "Only this crab remains of the shapely Tree of Life in my fool's paradise."]

PAULINE.

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le sçaurois jamais être. — *Marot.*

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt. Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniiis scandalo esse: . . . adeo conscientiæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantum in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod

si qua repperitis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. 30 Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.— *Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Præfat.*

LONDON: January, 1833.
V. A. XX.

[This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment.] 40

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me — thy
soft breast
Shall pant to mine — bend o'er me — thy
sweet eyes,
And loosened hair and breathing lips, and
arms
Drawing me to thee — these build up a
screen,
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear;
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood

Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-

Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to
return

To one so watched, so loved and so secured.
But what can guard thee but thy naked

love?
Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned wound
Envenoms his own veins! Thou art so

good,
— if thou shouldst wear a brow
less light

For some wild thought which, but for me,
were kept

From out thy soul as from a sacred star!

Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain
To hope to sing; some woe would light on

Nature would point at one whose quivering
lip

Was bathed in her enchantments, whose
brow burned

Beneath the crown to which her secrets
kneft,

Who learned the spell which can call up
the dead.

And then departed smiling like a fiend
Who has deceived God, — if such one

should seek
Again her altars and stand robed and

crowned
Amid the faithful! Sad confession first,

Remorse and pardon and old claims re-
newed,

Ere I can be — as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame if I had
sat

By thee for ever from the first, in place
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,

Or with them, as an earnest of their truth:
No thought nor hope having been shut

from thee,
No vague wish unexplained, no wander-

ing aim
Sent back to bind on fancy's wings and

seek
Some strange fair world where it might be

a law;
But, doubting nothing, had been led by

thee,
Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length

awaked
Who has slept through a peril. Ah vain,

vain!

Thou lovest me; the past is in its grave
Tho' its ghost haunts us; still this much is

ours,
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing

Wait for us in the dark. Thou lovest me;
And thou art to receive not love but faith,

For which thou wilt be mine, and smile and
take

And answer and shame, and tell without a
fear

That form which music follows like a slave: 40

And I look to thee and I trust in thee,
As in a Northern night one looks alway

Unto the East for morn and spring and joy.
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,

And, resting on some few old feelings won
Back by thy beauty, wouldst that I essay

The task which was to me what now thou
art:

And why should I conceal one weakness
more?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn
when winter

Crept aged from the earth, and spring's 50
first breath

Blew soft from the moist hills; the black-
thorn bowers,

So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming

buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the

banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.

I walked with thee who knewst not a deep
shame

Lurked beneath smiles and careless words
which sought

To hide it till they wandered and were
mute,

As we stood listening on a sunny mound
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,

Like heavy breathings of some hidden
thing 60

Betrayed by sleep; until the feeling rushed
That I was low indeed, yet not so low

As to endure the calmness of thine eyes.
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast

I leaned on altered not its quiet beating:
And long ere words like a hurt bird's com-

plaint
Bade me look up and be what I had been,

I felt despair could never live by thee:
Thou wilt remember. Thou art not more

dear 70

Than song was once to me; and I ne'er
sung

But as one entering bright halls where all
Will rise and shout for him: sure I must

own
That I am fallen, having chosen gifts

Distinct from theirs — that I am sad and
fain

Would give up all to be but where I was,
Not high as I had been if faithful found,

But low and weak yet full of hope, and
sure

Of goodness as of life — that I would lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit 80

Once more with them, trusting in truth and
love

And with an aim — not being what I am.

Oh Pauline, I am ruined who believed
That though my soul had floated from its
sphere
Of wild dominion into the dim orb
Of self — that it was strong and free as
ever!
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and
now
Must stay where it alone can be adored.
I have felt this in dreams — in dreams in
which
I seemed the fate from which I fled; I felt
10 A strange delight in causing my decay.
I was a fiend in darkness chained for ever
Within some ocean cave; and ages rolled
Till through the cleft rock, like a moon-
beam, came
A white swan to remain with me; and ages
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first free joy
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings:
And then I said "It is most fair to me,
Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered
change
From the thick darkness, sure its eyes are
dim,
20 "Its silver pinions must be cramped and
numbed
"With sleeping ages here; it cannot leave
me,
"For it would seem, in light beside its kind,
"Withered, tho' here to me most beauti-
ful."
And then I was a young witch whose blue
eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god: I watched his radiant
form
Growing less radiant, and it gladdened me;
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
30 He turned to look at me ere I could lose
The grin with which I viewed his perishing:
And he shrieked and departed and sat long
By his deserted throne, but sunk at last
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled
Around him, "I am still a god — to thee."
Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall;
Since all the wandering and all the weak-
ness
Will be a saddest comment on the song:
And if, that done, I can be young again,
40 I will give up all gained, as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him
out
From hope or part or care in human kind.
As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
Seem strangely valueless, while the old
trees
Which grew by our youth's home, the
waving mass
Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and
dew,

The morning swallows with their songs like
words,
All these seem clear and only worth our
thoughts:
So, aught connected with my early life,
My rude songs or my wild imaginings, 50
How I look on them — most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years!
I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,
Had not the glow I felt at His award,
Assured me all was not extinct within:
His whom all honour, whose renown
springs up
Like sunlight which will visit all the world,
So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,
Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls
From his foul nets which some lit torch 60
invades,
Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.
Thou didst smile, poet, but can we forgive?
Sun-treader,¹ life and light be thine for
ever!
Thou art gone from us; years go by and
spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee: they stand, thy
majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some spirit
there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen 70
And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
The air seems bright with thy past presence
yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like
them,
And with them creatures of my own were
mixed,
Like things half-lived, catching and giving
life.
But thou art still for me who have adored 80
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name
Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men!
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long
grasses cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly —
Joying to see some wandering insect won
To live in its few rushes, or some locust
To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless 90
air:
And then should find it but the fountain-
head,

- Long lost, of some great river washing
towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which
will live
But by its banks untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie
quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous
change;
Then fight with rocks which seek to turn or
stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
10 Being the pulse of some great country — so
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the
world!
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
That I am not what I have been to thee:
Like a girl one has silently loved long
In her first loneliness in some retreat,
When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to
view
Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which
bloom
Like a mountain berry: doubtless it is
sweet
To see her thus adored, but there have been
20 Moments when all the world was in our
praise,
Sweeter than any pride of after hours.
Yet, sun-treader, all hail! From my
heart's heart
I bid thee hail! E'en in my wildest
dreams,
I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'er-
hanging me,
To see thee for a moment as thou art.
- And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit!
Remember me who set this final seal
To wandering thought — that one so pure
as thou
30 Could never die. Remember me who
flung
All honour from my soul, yet paused and
said
"There is one spark of love remaining yet,
"For I have nought in common with him,
shapes
"Which followed him avoid me, and foul
forms
"Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his
mind;
"And though I feel how low I am to him,
"Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
"Of harmonies he called profusely up;
"So, one gleam still remains, although the
last,"
40 Remember me who praise thee e'en with
tears,
For never more shall I walk calm with thee;
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
- A melody some wondrous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still
eve,
They dream not to essay; yet it no less
But more is honoured. I was thine in
shame,
And now when all thy proud renown is out,
I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star which breaks
on him
Altered and worn and weak and full of
tears.
- Autumn has come like spring returned
to us,
Won from her girlishness; like one re-
turned
A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober
thoughts
Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers
yet
With the old smile, but yet so changed and
still!
And here am I the scoffer, who have
probed
Life's vanity, won by a word again
Into my own life — by one little word
Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me, 60
Lives strangely on my thoughts and looks
and words,
As fathoms down some nameless ocean
thing
Its silent course of quietness and joy.
O dearest, if indeed I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream!
Or if it linger — my lost soul too soon
Sinks to itself and whispers we shall be
But closer linked, two creatures whom the
earth
Bears singly, with strange feelings unre-
vealed
Save to each other; or two lonely things 70
Created by some power whose reign is done,
Having no part in God or his bright world.
I am to sing whilst ebbing day dies soft,
As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one
As hunted men steal to their mountain
watch.
I must not think, lest this new impulse die
In which I trust; I have no confidence:
So, I will sing on fast as fancies come;
Rudely, the verse being as the mood it so
paints.
- I strip my mind bare, whose first elements
I shall unveil — not as they struggled forth
In infancy, nor as they now exist,
When I am grown above them and can
rule —
But in that middle stage when they were
full
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;

And then I shall show how these elements
Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings,
powers;

And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all:
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
10 Most potent to create and rule and call
Upon all things to minister to it;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste,
feel, all —

This is myself; and I should thus have
been

Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save
From utter death a soul with such desire
Confined to clay — of powers the only one
Which marks me — an imagination which
20 Has been a very angel, coming not
In fitful visions but beside me ever
And never failing me; so, though my mind
Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets,
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
The dark past up to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that
star —

30 A need, a trust, a yearning after God:
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear: and thence I date my trust in
signs

And omens, for I saw God everywhere;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
40 Even his being — e'en the while I felt
His presence, never acted from myself,
Still trusted in a hand to lead me through
All danger; and this feeling ever fought
Against my weakest reason and resolve.

And I can love nothing — and this dull
truth

Has come the last: but sense supplies a
love

Encircling me and mingling with my life.
These make myself: I have long sought
in vain

To trace how they were formed by circum-
stance,

50 Yet ever found them mould my wildest
youth

Where they alone displayed themselves,
converted

All objects to their use: now see their
course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life
Which passed alone with wisest ancient
books

All halo-girt with fancies of my own;
And I myself went with the tale — a god
Wandering after beauty, or a giant
Standing vast in the sunset — an old hunter
Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos. 60
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of those
lives:

I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's
face,

Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue
sea,

The deep groves and white temples and
wet caves:

And nothing ever will surprise me now —
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's 70
hair.

And strange it is that I who could so dream
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught
beneath —

Aught low or painful; but I never doubted:
So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants; yet strong be-
neath

Was a vague sense of power though folded
up —

A sense that, though those shades and
times were past,

Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should
rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint
chained down

My soul till it was changed. I lost myself, 80
And were it not that I so loathe that loss,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself; and the effects

In deeds for which remorse were vain as
for

The wanderings of delirious dream; yet
thence

Came cunning, envy, falsehood, all world's
wrong

That spotted me: at length I cleansed my
soul.

Yet long world's influence remained; and
nought

But the still life I led, apart once more,
Which left me free to seek soul's old 90
delights,

Could e'er have brought me thus far back
to peace.

As peace returned, I sought out some
pursuit;
And song rose, no new impulse but the
one
With which all others best could be com-
bined.
My life has not been that of those whose
heaven
Was lampless save where poesy shone out;
But as a clime where glittering mountain-
tops
And glancing sea and forests steeped in
light
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;
For music (which is earnest of a heaven,
10 Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed,) is like a voice,
A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer
time:
And she fills all the way with dancing
shapes
Which have made painters pale, and they
go on
Till stars look at them and winds call to
them
As they leave life's path for the twilight
world
Where the dead gather. This was not at
first,
For I scarce knew what I would do. I had
20 An impulse but no yearning — only sang.

And first I sang as I in dream have seen
Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
Yet singing to herself until it came.
I turned to those old times and scenes
where all
That's beautiful had birth for me, and
made
Rude verses on them all; and then I
paused —
I had done nothing, so I sought to know
What other minds achieved. No fear
outbroke
As on the works of mighty bards I gazed,
30 In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, my own fancies justified,
And their aspirings but my very own.
With them I first explored passion and
mind, —
All to begin afresh! I rather sought
To rival what I wondered at than form
Creations of my own; if much was light
Lent by the others, much was yet my own.

I paused again: a change was coming —
came:
I was no more a boy, the past was breaking
40 Before the future and like fever worked.
I thought on my new self, and all my pow-
ers
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but
gazed

On all things: schemes and systems went
and came,
And I was proud (being vainest of the
weak)
In wandering o'er thought's world to seek
some one
To be my prize, as if you wandered o'er
The White Way for a star.

And my choice fell
Not so much on a system as a man —
On one, whom praise of mine shall not
offend,
Who was as calm as beauty, being such 50
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline, —
Believing in them and devoting all
His soul's strength to their winning back to
peace;
Who sent forth hopes and longings for
their sake,
Clothed in all passion's melodies: such
first
Caught me and set me, slave of a sweet
task,
To disentangle, gather sense from song:
Since, song-inwoven, lurked there words
which seemed
A key to a new world, the muttering
Of angels, something yet unguessed by 60
man.
How my heart leapt as still I sought and
found
Much there, I felt my own soul had con-
ceived,
But there living and burning! Soon the
orb
Of his conceptions dawned on me; its
praise
Lives in the tongues of men, men's brows
are high
When his name means a triumph and a
pride,
So, my weak voice may well forbear to
shame
What seemed decreed my fate: I threw
myself
To meet it, I was vowed to liberty,
Men were to be as gods and earth as 70
heaven,
And I — ah, what a life was mine to prove!
My whole soul rose to meet it. Now,
Pauline,
I shall go mad, if I recall that time!

Oh let me look back ere I leave for ever
The time which was an hour one fondly
waits
For a fair girl that comes a withered hag!
And I was lonely, far from woods and
fields,
And amid dullest sights, who should be
loose
As a stag; yet I was full of bliss, who lived
With Plato and who had the key to life; 80

And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
And many a thought did I build up on
thought,
As the wild bee hangs cell to cell; in vain,
For I must still advance, no rest for mind.

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
The life all new to me; my theories
Were firm, so them I left, to look and
learn
Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes
and joys;
And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought
How best life's end might be attained —
an end
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke
As from a dream: I said "'Twas beau-
tiful,
'Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it!"
As some world-wanderer sees in a far
meadow
Strange towers and high-walled gardens
thick with trees,
Where song takes shelter and delicious
mirth
From laughing fairy creatures peeping
over,
And on the morrow when he comes to lie
For ever 'neath those garden-trees fruit-
flushed
Sung round by fairies, all his search is vain.
First went my hopes of perfecting man-
kind,
Next — faith in them, and then in free-
dom's self
And virtue's self, then my own motives,
ends
And aims and loves, and human love went
last.

I felt this no decay, because new powers
Rose as old feelings left — wit, mockery,
Light-heartedness; for I had oft been sad,
Mistrusting my resolves, but now I cast
Hope joyously away: I laughed and said
"No more of this!" I must not think: at
length
I looked again to see if all went well.

My powers were greater: as some temple
seemed
My soul, where nought is changed and
incense rolls
Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.
So, I passed through the temple and to me
Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried
"Hail, king!"
"We serve thee now and thou shalt serve
no more!"
"Call on us, prove us, let us worship
thee!"

And I said "Are ye strong? Let fancy
bear me
"Far from the past!" And I was borne
away,
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being
calm.
And I said "I have nursed up energies,
"They will prey on me." And a band
knelt low
And cried "Lord, we are here and we will
make
"Safe way for thee in thine appointed life!
"But look on us!" And I said "Ye will
worship

"Me; should my heart not worship too?" 5d
They shouted
"Thyself, thou art our king!" So, I
stood there
Smiling — oh, vanity of vanities!
For buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
With which I looked out how to end my
course;
I felt once more myself, my powers — all
mine;
I knew while youth and health so lifted me
That, spite of all life's nothingness, no grief
Came nigh me, I must ever be light-
hearted;
And that this knowledge was the only veil
Betwixt joy and despair: so, if age came, 6a
I should be left — a wreck linked to a soul
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken and aware
Of my decay. So a long summer morn
Found me; and ere noon came, I had
resolved
No age should come on me ere youth was
spent,
For I would wear myself out, like that
morn
Which wasted not a sunbeam; every hour
I would make mine, and die.

And thus I sought
To chain my spirit down which erst I freed
For flights to fame: I said "The troubled 7a
life
"Of genius, seen so gay when working
forth
"Some trusted end, grows sad when all
proves vain —
"How sad when men have parted with
truth's peace
"For falsest fancy's sake, which waited
first
"As an obedient spirit when delight
"Came without fancy's call: but alters
soon,
"Comes darkened, seldom, hastens to
depart,
"Leaving a heavy darkness and warm
tears.
"But I shall never lose her; she will live
"Dearer for such seclusion. I but catch 8a

"A hue, a glance of what I sing: so, pain
 "Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may
 tell
 "Half the bright sights which dazzle me;
 but now
 "Mine shall be all the radiance: let them
 fade
 "Untold — others shall rise as fair, as fast!
 And when all's done, the few dim gleams
 transferred," —
 (For a new thought sprang up how well it
 were,
 Discarding shadowy hope, to weave such
 lays
 As straight encircle men with praise and
 love,
 10 So, I should not die utterly, — should
 bring
 One branch from the gold forest, like the
 knight
 Of old tales, witnessing I had been there) —
 "And when all's done, how vain seems e'en
 success —
 "The vaunted influence poets have o'er
 men!
 "Tis a fine thing that one weak as myself
 "Should sit in his lone room, knowing the
 words
 "He utters in his solitude shall move
 "Men like a swift wind — that tho' dead
 and gone,
 "New eyes shall glisten when his beauteous
 dreams
 20 "Of love come true in happier frames than
 his.
 "Ay, the still night brings thoughts like
 these, but morn
 "Comes and the mockery again laughs out
 "At hollow praises, smiles allied to sneers;
 "And my soul's idol ever whispers me
 "To dwell with him and his unhonoured
 song:
 "And I foreknow my spirit, that would
 press
 "First in the struggle, fail again to make
 "All bowenslaved, and I again should sink.
 "And then know that this curse will come
 on us,
 30 "To see our idols perish; we may wither,
 "No marvel, we are clay, but our low fate
 "Should not extend to those whom trust-
 ingly
 "We sent before into time's yawning gulf
 "To face what dread may lurk in darkness
 there.
 "To find the painter's glory pass, and feel
 "Music can move us not as once, or, worst,
 "To weep decaying wits ere the frail body
 "Decays! Nought makes me trust some
 love is true,
 "But the delight of the contented lowness
 40 "With which I gaze on him I keep for ever
 "Above me: I to rise and rival him?

"Feed his fame rather from my heart's
 best blood,
 "Wither unseen that he may flourish still."
 Pauline, my soul's friend, thou dost pity yet
 How this mood swayed me when that soul
 found thine,
 When I had set myself to live this life,
 Defying all past glory. Ere thou camest
 I seemed defiant, sweet, for old delights
 Had flocked like birds again; music, my
 life,
 Nourished me more than ever; then the
 lore
 Loved for itself and all it showd — that
 king
 Treading the purple calmly to his death,¹
 While round him, like the clouds of eve, all
 dusk,
 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
 Pile the dim outline of the coming doom;
 And him sitting alone in blood while friends
 Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the
 boy
 With his white breast and brow and cluster-
 ing curls
 Streaked with his mother's blood, but striv-
 ing hard
 To tell his story ere his reason goes. 6
 And when I loved thee as love seemed so
 oft,
 Thou lovedst me indeed: I wondering
 searched
 My heart to find some feeling like such
 love,
 Believing I was still much I had been.
 Too soon I found all faith had gone from
 me,
 And the late glow of life, like change on
 clouds,
 Proved not the morn-blush widening into
 day,
 But eve faint-coloured by the dying sun
 While darkness hastens quickly. I will
 tell
 My state as though 'twere none of mine — 7
 despair
 Cannot come near us — this it is, my state.
 Souls alter not, and mine must still ad-
 vance;
 Strange that I knew not, when I flung away
 My youth's chief aims, their loss might
 lead to loss
 Of what few I retained, and no resource
 Be left me: for behold how changed is
 all!
 I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
 In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
 It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
 Which nowise I account for nor explain, 8
 But cannot stifle, being bound to trust

¹ Agamemnon.

All feelings equally, to hear all sides:
How can my life indulge them? yet they
live,
Referring to some state of life unknown.

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame; my hunger for
All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, grows pain;
I envy — how I envy him whose soul
Turns its whole energies to some one end,
To elevate an aim, pursue success
However mean! So, my still baffled hope
Seeks out abstractions; I would have one
joy,

But one in life, so it were wholly mine,
One rapture all my soul could fill: and this
Wild feeling places me in dream afar
In some vast country where the eye can see
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
With shining towers and towns, till I grow
mad

Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds
Some pleasure, while my soul could grasp
the world,

But must remain this vile form's slave. I
look

With hope to age at last, which quenching
much,

May let me concentrate what sparks it
spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge: the sole proof
Of yet commanding will is in that power
Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn,
The sleepless harpy with just-budding
wings,

And I considered whether to forego
All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live,
Finding a recompense in its wild eyes.

And when I found that I should perish so,
I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever,
And I am left alone with old delights;
Seel it lies in me a chained thing, still
prompt

To serve me if I loose its slightest bond:
I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

How should this earth's life prove my only
sphere?

Can I so narrow sense but that in life
Soul still exceeds it? In their elements
My love outsoars my reason; but since love
Perforce receives its object from this earth
While reason wanders chainless, the few
truths

Caught from its wanderings have sufficed
to quell

Love chained below; then what were love,
set free,

Which, with the object it demands, would
pass

Reason companioning the seraphim?
No, what I feel may pass all human love

Yet fall far short of what my love should be.
And yet I seem more warped in this than
aught,

Myself stands out more hideously: of old
I could forget myself in friendship, fame,
Liberty, nay, in love of mightier souls;
But I begin to know what thing hate is —
To sicken and to quiver and grow white —
And I myself have furnished its first prey.
Hate of the weak and ever-wavering will,
The selfishness, the still-decaying frame, . .
But I must never grieve whom wing can
waft

Far from such thoughts — as now. An-
dromeda! ¹

And she is with me: years roll, I shall 60
change,

But change can touch her not — so beauti-
ful

With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and
hair

Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping
breeze,

And one red beam, all the storm leaves in
heaven,

Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
By the dark rock and the white wave just
breaking

At her feet; quite naked and alone; a
thing

I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
To save will come in thunder from the 70
stars.

Let it pass! Soul requires another change.
I will be gifted with a wondrous mind,

Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life, yet only so

As to call up their fears; and there shall
come

A time requiring youth's best energies;
And lo, I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
And rise triumphant, triumph through de-
cay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all I fain would be: 80
But then to know nothing, to hope for
nothing,

To seize on life's dull joys from a strange
fear

Lest, losing them, all's lost and nought
remains!

There's some vile juggle with my reason
here;

I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses: they live no less the same.

Liberty! what though I despair? my
blood

Rose never at a slave's name proud as now.
Oh sympathies, obscured by sophistries! —

Why else have I sought refuge in myself, 90

¹ As painted by Polidoro di Caravaggio.

But from the woes I saw and could not stay?
 Love! is not this to love thee, my Pauline?
 I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
 Utterly loveless? witness my belief
 In poets, though sad change has come
 there too;
 No more I leave myself to follow them —
 Unconsciously I measure me by them —
 Let me forget it: and I cherish most
 My love of England — how her name, a
 word
 10 Of hers in a strange tongue makes my heart
 beat!

Pauline, could I but break the spell! Not
 now —
 All's fever — but when calm shall come
 again,
 I am prepared: I have made life my own.
 I would not be content with all the change
 One frame should feel, but I have gone in
 thought
 Thro' all conjuncture, I have lived all life
 When it is most alive, where strangest fate
 New-shapes it past surmise — the throes
 of men
 Bit by some curse or in the grasps of doom
 20 Half-visible and still-increasing round,
 Or crowning their wide being's general aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet
 friend,
 As one breathing his weakness to the ear
 Of pitying angel — dear as a winter flower,
 A slight flower growing alone, and offering
 Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold
 sun,
 Yet joyous and confiding like the triumph
 Of a child: and why am I not worthy thee?
 I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
 30 Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
 Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will
 kill,
 Or open in the night of sounds, to look
 For the dim stars; I can mount with the
 bird
 Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
 And twisted boughs of some tall mountain
 tree,
 Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens;
 Or like a fish breathe deep the morning air
 In the misty sun-warm water; or with
 flower
 And tree can smile in light at the sinking
 sun
 40 Just as the storm comes, as a girl would
 look
 On a departing lover — most serene.

Pauline, come with me, see how I could
 build
 A home for us, out of the world, in thought!
 I am uplifted: fly with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
 Between the sullen river and the woods
 Waving and muttering, for the moonless
 night
 Has shaped them into images of life,
 Like the uprising of the giant-ghosts,
 Looking on earth to know how their sons
 fare:
 Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell
 Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the pant-
 ing
 Of thy soft breasts. No, we will pass to
 morning —
 Morning, the rocks and valleys and old
 woods.
 How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,
 Half in the air, like creatures of the place,
 Trusting the element, living on high boughs
 That swing in the wind — look at the silver
 spray
 Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract
 Amid the broken rocks! Shall we stay
 here
 With the wild hawks? No, ere the hot
 noon come,
 Dive we down — safe! See this our new
 retreat
 Walled in with a sloped mound of matted
 shrubs,
 Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping
 down
 To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
 Amid the trailing boughs turned water-
 plants:
 And tall trees overarch to keep us in,
 Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,
 And in the dreamy water one small group
 Of two or three strange trees are got to-
 gether
 Wondering at all around, as strange beasts
 herd
 Together far from their own land: all
 wildness,
 No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants
 pave all,
 And tongues of bank go shelving in the
 lymph,
 Where the pale-throated snake reclines his
 head,
 And old grey stones lie making eddies there,
 The wild-mice cross them dry-shod,
 Deeper in!
 Shut thy soft eyes — now look — still
 deeper in!
 This is the very heart of the woods all
 round
 Mountain-like heaped above us; yet even
 here
 One pond of water gleams; far off the
 river
 Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land;
 but one —
 One thin clear sheet has overleaped and
 wound

Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies
Still, as but let by sufferance; the trees
 bend
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
And through their roots long creeping
 plants out-stretch
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling;
 farther on,
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have com-
 bined
To narrow it; so, at length, a silver thread,
It winds, all noiselessly through the deep
 wood
Till thro' a cleft-way, thro' the moss and
 stone,
It joins its parent-river with a shout.

Up for the glowing day, leave the old woods!
See, they part like a ruined arch: the sky!
Nothing but sky appears, so close the roots
And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats
 laden
With light, like a dead whale that white
 birds pick,
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching
 air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth
 us,

Where small birds reel and winds take
 their delight!
Water is beautiful, but not like air:
See, where the solid azure waters lie
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks like a forest spread them-
 selves
As though each pore could feel the element;
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his
 way,
Float with me there, Pauline! — but not
 like air.

Down the hill! Stop — a clump of trees,
 see, set
On a heap of rock, which look o'er the far
 plain:
So, envious climbing shrubs would mount
 to rest
And peer from their spread boughs; wide
 they wave, looking
At the muleteers who whistle on their way,
To the merry chime of morning bells, past
 all
The little smoking cots, mid fields and
 banks
And corpses bright in the sun. My spirit
 wanders:
Hedgerows for me — those living hedge-
 rows where
The bushes close and clasp above and keep
Thought in — I am concentrated — I feel;
But my soul saddens when it looks beyond:
I cannot be immortal, taste all joy.

O God, where do they tend — these strug-
 gling aims?¹
What would I have? What is this "sleep"
 which seems

To bound all? can there be a "waking"
 point

Of crowning life? The soul would never
 rule;

It would be first in all things, it would have
Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that com-
 plete,

Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.
The last point I can trace is — rest beneath
Some better essence than itself, in weak-
 ness;

This is "myself," not what I think should
 be:

And what is that I hunger for but God?

My God, my God, let me for once look on
 thee

As though nought else existed, we alone!
And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands till I can say, — Even from my-
 self

I need thee and I feel thee and I love thee.

I do not plead my rapture in thy works

For love of thee, nor that I feel as one

Who cannot die: but there is that in me

Which turns to thee, which loves or which
 should love.

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?

Why have I laboured to put out my life?

Is it not in my nature to adore,

And e'en for all my reason do I not

Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him
 — now?

Can I forego the trust that he loves me?

Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .

O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-
 eyed!

I have denied thee calmly — do I not

Pant when I read of thy consummate
 power,

And burn to see thy calm pure truths out-
 flash

The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?

Do I not shake to hear aught question thee?

If I am erring save me, madden me,

Take from me powers and pleasures, let me
 die

Ages, so I see thee! I am knit round

As with a charm by sin and lust and pride,

Yet though my wandering dreams have
 seen all shapes

Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee —

Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee
 8a

In the damp night by weeping Olivet,

Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,

Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,

Or witnessing thine outburst from the tomb.

¹ See note at the end of the poem.

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering and poverty and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved.

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Desert me, and old shades are gathering
fast;

Yet while the last light waits, I would say
much,

10 This chiefly, it is gain that I have said
Somewhat of love I ever felt for thee
But seldom told; our hearts so beat to-
gether

That speech seemed mockery; but when
dark hours come,
And joy departs, and thou, sweet, deem'st
it strange

A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove,
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which through thee I began, which thus I
end,

Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
How I am thine, and more than ever now
That I sink fast: yet though I deeper
sink,

No less song proves one word has brought
me bliss,

Another still may win bliss surely back.
Thou knowest, dear, I could not think all
calm,

For fancies followed thought and bore me
off,

And left all indistinct; ere one was caught
Another glanced; so, dazzled by my
wealth,

I knew not which to leave nor which to
choose,

For all so floated, nought was fixed and
firm.

And then thou said'st a perfect bard was
one

30 Who chronicled the stages of all life,
And so thou bad'st me shadow this first
stage.

'Tis done, and even now I recognise
The shift, the change from last to past —
discern

Faintly how life is truth and truth is
good.

And why thou must be mine is, that e'en
now

In the dim hush of night, that I have done,
Despite the sad forebodings, love looks
through —

Whispers — E'en at the last I have her
still,

With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven

40 When rain in a quick shower has beat down
mist,

And clouds float white above like broods of

How the blood lies upon her cheek, out-
spread

As thinned by kisses! only in her lips
It wells and pulses like a living thing,
And her neck looks like marble misted o'er
With love-breath, — a Pauline from heights
above,

Stooping beneath me, looking up — one
look

As I might kill her and be loved the more
So, love me — me, Pauline, and nought but
me,

Never leave loving! Words are wild and
weak,

Believe them not, Pauline! I stained my-
self

But to behold thee purer by my side,
To show thou art my breath, my life, a last
Resource, an extreme want: never believe
Aught better could so look on thee; nor
seek

Again the world of good thoughts left for
mine!

There were bright troops of undiscovered
suns,

Each equal in their radiant course; there
were

Clusters of far fair isles which ocean kept
For his own joy, and his waves broke on
them

Without a choice; and there was a dim
crowd

Of visions, each a part of some grand
whole:

And one star left his peers and came with
peace

Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him;
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship

And the crew wandered in its bowers and
plucked

Its fruits and gave up all their hopes of
home;

And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
And he said, "I am singled out by God,

"No sin must touch me." Words are wild
and weak,

But what they would express is, — Leave
me not,

Still sit by me with beating breast and hair
Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,

Turning my books or kissing me when I
Look up — like summer wind! Be still
to me

A help to music's mystery which mind fails
To fathom, its solution, no mere clue!

O reason's pedantry, life's rule prescribed!
I hopeless, I the loveless, hope and love.

Wiser and better, know me now, not when
You loved me as I was. Smile not! I have

Much yet to dawn on you, to gladden you.
No more of the past! I'll look within no
more.

I have too trusted my own lawless wants,
Too trusted my vain self, vague intuition —

Draining soul's wine alone in the still night,
And seeing how, as gathering films arose,
As by an inspiration life seemed bare
And grinning in its vanity, while ends
Foul to be dreamed of, smiled at me as
fixed

And fair, while others changed from fair to
foul

As a young witch turns an old hag at night.
No more of this! We will go hand in
hand,

I with thee, even as a child — love's slave,
Looking no farther than his liege com-
mands.

And thou hast chosen where this life shall
be:

The land which gave me thee shall be our
home,

Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes
And snow-swathed mountains and vast
pines begirt

With ropes of snow — where nature lies all
bare.

Suffering none to view her but a race
Or stunted or deformed, like the mute
dwarfs

Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the
heavens are thick

With storm) I'll sit with thee while thou
dost sing

Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Which crieth as it flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights;
Or I will read great lays to thee — how
she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave¹
With power to love and to be loved and live:
Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead, to call and to awake,
Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave: only leaving all,
That tells of the past doubt. So, when
spring comes

With sunshine back again like an old smile,
And the fresh waters and awakened birds
And budding woods await us, I shall be
Prepared, and we will question life once
more,

Till its old sense shall come renewed by
change,

Like some clear thought which harsh words
veiled before;

Feeling God loves us, and that all which
errs

Is but a dream which death will dissipate.
And then what need of longer exile? Seek
My England, and, again there, calm ap-
proach

All I once fled from, calmly look on those

The works of my past weakness, as one
views

Some scene where danger met him long
before.

Ah that such pleasant life should be but
dreamed!

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,
And though ere the cold morning all be
gone,

As it may be; — tho' music wait to wile,
And strange eyes and bright wine lure, 50
laugh like sin

Which steals back softly on a soul half
saved,

And I the first deny, decry, despise,
With this avowal, these intents so fair, —
Still be it all my own, this moment's
pride!

No less I make an end in perfect joy.
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
Possessed me: I well knew my weak re-
solves,

I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
Over its treasure, as one half afraid
To make his riches definite: but now 60

These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless care
Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some
new

And undreamed end reveal itself too late:
For this song shall remain to tell for ever
That when I lost all hope of such a change,
Suddenly beauty rose on me again.

No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, who thus again was visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits 70

And, though this weak soul sink and dark-
ness whelm,

Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
To where I clearer see and better love,
As I again go o'er the tracts of thought
Like one who has a right, and I shall live
With poets, calmer, purer still each time,
And beauteous shapes will come for me to
seize,

And unknown secrets will be trusted me
Which were denied the waverer once; but
now

I shall be priest and prophet as of old. 80

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love; and as one just escaped from
death

Would bind himself in bands of friends to
feel

He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom
If such must come, but chiefly when I die,
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant: but live thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me!
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts 90
of me

¹ Antigone.

Know my last state is happy, free from
doubt
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me
well.

RICHMOND:

October 22, 1832.

NOTE.

Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne
soit pas toujours parfaitement compris
dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange frag-
ment, mais il est moins propre que tout
autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut
jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ail-
leurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à
mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on
ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul
mérite auquel une production si singulière
peut prétendre, celui de donner une idée
assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait
qu'ébaucher. Ce début sans prétention,
ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord
en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés,
ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur
soi-même, et par-dessus tout, la tournure
d'esprit tout particulière de mon ami, ren-
dent les changemens presque impossibles.

Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et
d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait
trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit
qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter
au feu. Je n'en crois pas moins au grand
principe de toute composition -- à ce prin-
cipe de Shakespeare, de Raphaëlle, de Bee-
thoven, d'où il suit que la concentration
des idées est due bien plus à leur conception
qu'à leur mise en exécution: j'ai tout lieu
de craindre que la première de ces qualités
ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami, et je
doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail
lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux
serait de brûler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allu-
sion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois
de l'âme, ou plutôt de son âme, pour dé-
couvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui
serait possible d'atteindre, et dont chacun
une fois obtenu devait former une espèce
de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir
d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres
jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être
surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le
sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette
idée, que je ne saisis pas parfaitement, lui
est peut-être aussi inintelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

PARACELSUS.

1835.

[In his choice of Paracelsus, Browning exhibits that fondness for learned subjects and out-of-the-way reading which always characterised him. A Life of Paracelsus, did it only exist, would be a fascinating record of times and ideas now well-nigh inconceivable by us. Paracelsus (a name invented by himself to indicate that he was greater than Celsus) was the son of a doctor, and was born about 1490 in Einsiedeln, in the Swiss canton of Schwyz. He studied at Basel University, and was taught alchemy and chemistry by the renowned Trithemius. He also acquired in the mines in the Tyrol belonging to the Fugger family a practical acquaintance with minerals. His merit became that of an observer and an acquirer of facts. He wandered all over Europe, and even reached Samarcand. In 1526 he returned to Basel, and was appointed town physician, and lectured before the University. His behaviour was eccentric, and his conceit boundless. In 1528 he left Basel and resumed his wandering life. He died in Salzburg in 1541—some say he was murdered, and others that he drank himself to death. He has been credited with an enormous number of works explanatory of his system, which was a mixture of mysticism, charlatanism, and useful empiricism. He lectured both in Latin and German. Erasmus consulted him for the stone, and he is said to have cured the famous printer, Froben, of the gout. It is asserted on his behalf that he discovered zinc, hydrogen gas, and the tincture of opium. His *azoth* is sometimes supposed to have been electricity (see *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xviii.). The poem sufficiently explains itself, and presents no difficulty to an intelligent reader.]

INSCRIBED TO

AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

LONDON: March 15, 1835.

PARACELSUS.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, *a student.*
FESTUS and MICHAL, *his friends.*
APRILE, *an Italian poet.*

I. — PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE. — Würzburg; a garden in the environs. 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Paracelsus. Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now it beats — perchance a long, long time —

At least henceforth your memories shall make

Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.

Nor shall my memory want a home in yours —

Alas, that it requires too well such free Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!

For if you would remember me aright,

As I was born to be, you must forget

All fitful strange and moody waywardness

Which e'er confused my better spirit to dwell

Only on moments such as these, dear friends!

— My heart no truer, but my words and ways

More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,

Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"

For some few sunny days; and overlook

Its bleak wind, hankering after pining
leaves.

Autumn would fain be sunny; I would
look

Liker my nature's truth: and both are frail,
And both beloved, for all our frailty.

Michal. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Drop by drop! she is
weeping like a child!

Not so! I am content — more than con-
tent;

Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay:

Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
10 Your stained and drooping vines their
grapes bow down,

Not blame those creaking trees bent with
their fruit,

That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth
among!

Then for the winds — what wind that ever
raved

Shall vex that ash which overlooks you
both,

So proud it wears its berries? Ah, at
length,

The old smile meet for her, the lady of
this

Sequestered nest! — this kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall

20 Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick
spiders,

Each family of the silver-threaded moss —
Which, look through near, this way, and it
appears

A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh
now!

Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world — or
best,

Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up

30 Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.
Michal. In truth we have lived care-
lessly and well.

Paracelsus. And shall, my perfect pair!
— each, trust me, born

For the other; nay, your very hair, when
mixed,

Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay:

that plant
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and
softly,

As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers,
but you

40 Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah see, the sun sinks
broad

Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone, at
last!

Festus. Now, Aureole, stay those wan-
dering eyes awhile!

You are ours to-night, at least; and while
you spoke

Of Michal and her tears, I thought that
none

Could willing leave what he so seemed to
love:

But that last look destroys my dream —
that look

As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a
star!

How far was Würzburg with its church
and spire

And garden-walls and all things they con-
tain,

From that look's far alighting?
Paracelsus. I but spoke

And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well

From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit, — dis-
posed

To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and
words, —

Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached
them too,

Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf

Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget

Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one

Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,

Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up

Whereas behold how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike! When

Festus learns

That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself; that I have just

As varied appetite for joy derived
From common things; a stake in life, in

short,
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit o

aims
That life affords not, would as soon de

stroy; —
He may convince himself that, this in view

I shall act well advised. And last, be-
cause,

Though heaven and earth and all thing
were at stake,

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting
eve.

Festus. True: and the eve is deepening
and we sit

As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it

As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithemius busied with his class the
while)

In that dim chamber where the noon-
streaks peer

Half-frightened by the awful tomes
around;

Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-
morrow!

Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?
We have been brothers, and henceforth the
world

to Will rise between us:—all my freest
mind?

'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!

Paracelsus. Oh, say on!

Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
To be performed for you: say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how
oft

My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes
and fears

Have — never wearied you, oh no! — as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,

Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us;

70 And still increasing to this night which
ends

My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one
day

You shall be very proud! Say on, dear
friends!

Festus. In truth? 'Tis for my proper
peace, indeed,

Rather than yours; for vain all projects
seem

To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells

Of some far embassy despatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how

The gifts they offered proved but dazzling
dust

30 Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,

I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend; and yet desist

No whit from projects where repose nor
love

Has part.

Paracelsus. Once more? Alas! As I
foretold.

Festus. A solitary brier the bank puts
forth

To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.
Paracelsus. Dear Festus, hear me.

What is it you wish?

That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
40 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,

Reject God's great commission, and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:

Yet how has grown that love? Even in a
long

And patient cherishing of the self-same
spirit

It now would quell; as though a mother
hoped

To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not

born

Informed and fearless from the first, but

shrank

From aught which marked me out apart
from men:

I would have lived their life, and died their 50
death,

Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt

and fear,

Taught me to know mankind and know
myself;

And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims

Save those your earnest words made plain
to me,

Now that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,

A glad cheer in their voices — Michal
weeps,

And Festus ponders gravely! 60
Festus. When you deign

To hear my purpose . . .
Paracelsus. Hear it? I can say

Beforehand all this evening's conference!
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,

Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's

end

And what God's will; no two faiths e'er
agreed

As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may;

Accordingly, I venture to submit
My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing 70

The path which God's will seems to au-
thorise.

Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,

A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired: in fine

Our two minds go together — all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognise,

All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
And nought forbids my looking up at last

For some stray comfort in his cautious 80
brow.

When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there
lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme; so that at last

It all amounts to this — the sovereign
proof

That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were;

A life which, prompted by the sad and
blind

Folly of man, Festus abhors the most;

But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the
same,

Consider it how they may.

Michal. Is it so, Festus?
He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?

Paracelsus. Reject those glorious visions
of God's love

And man's design; laugh loud that God
should send

Vast longings to direct us; say how soon

Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I
know

The world's cry well, and how to answer it.

10 But this ambiguous warfare . . .
Festus. . . . Wearies so

That you will grant no last leave to your
friend

To urge it? — for his sake, not yours? I
wish

To send my soul in good hopes after
you;

Never to sorrow that uncertain words

Erringly apprehended, a new creed

Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,

Had share in your undoing.

Paracelsus. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame
me not

Because I dare to act on your own views,

20 Nor shrink when they point onward, nor
esp

A peril where they most ensure success.

Festus. Prove that to me — but that I
Prove you abide

Within their warrant, nor presumptuous
boast

God's labour laid on you; prove, all you
covet

A mortal may expect; and, most of all,

Prove the strange course you now affect,
will lead

To its attainment — and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture
forth!

You smile; but I had gathered from slow
thought —

30 Much musing on the fortunes of my friend —
Matter I deemed could not be urged in
vain;

But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
And fragments I must venture what re-
mains.

Michal. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore
he should scorn . . .

Festus. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak
guardedly

And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your
error,

This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.

Not from your own confiding words alone

40 Am I aware your passionate heart long
since

Gave birth to, nourished and at length ma-
tures

This scheme. I will not speak of Einsied-
eln,

Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first:

In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then — 'twas mine to have you in my
view

As you had your own soul and those intents
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest
wish,

With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured 50

few

Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to
teach

A portion of his lore: and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now de-
spise,

Came earnest as you came, resolved, like
you,

To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.

Now, this new ardour which supplants the
old

I watched, too; 'twas significant and
strange,

In one matched to his soul's content at
length

With rivals in the search for wisdom's 60
prize,

To see the sudden pause, the total change;
From contest, the transition to repose —

From pressing onward as his fellows
pressed,

To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,

Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless
quest.

That careless bearing, free from all pre-
tence

Even of contempt for what it ceased to
seek —

Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiv-
ing

What it professed to praise — though not 70
so well

Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce
and brief,

Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly
curbed.

That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,

I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring

Upon his foe's throat; but it was not
thus:

Not that way looked your brooding pur-
pose then.

For after-signs disclosed, what you con-
firmed,

That you prepared to task to the utter- 80
most

Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
Which — while it bore the name your rivals gave
Their own most puny efforts — was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many, — the secret of the world,
Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
— That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
This purpose, with the sages of the past,
10 Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
And that this aim shall differ from a host
Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this, — that in itself alone
Shall its reward be, not an alien end
Blending therewith; no hope nor fear nor joy
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
Devotion to sustain you or betray:
20 Thus you aspire.
Paracelsus. You shall not state it thus:
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be his organ. All
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
No better than the sages.
Festus. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 'tis doubtless need
That he appoint no less the way of praise
30 Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind —
Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as he wills shall gather
Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
Valued perchance! He seeks not that his altars
40 Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
Suppose this, then; that God selected you
To know (heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,

An intense hope; nor let your gifts create
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
50 Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose — and again, that purpose
Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?
Paracelsus [after a pause]. No, I have
nought to fear! Who will may know
The secret'st workings of my soul. What
though
It be so? — if indeed the strong desire
60 Eclipse the aim in me? — if splendour
break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer
seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy? — this instinct
striving
Because its nature is to strive? — enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success for ever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my
own,
But in the restless irresistible force
70 That works within me? Is it for human
will
To institute such impulses? — still less,
To disregard their promptings! What
should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your
cares,
Your life — all to be mine? Be sure that
God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns
impart!
Ask the geier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from
the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating 80
The silent boundless regions of the sky!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs!
Nor fear
Their holding light his charge, when every
hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new
death.
This for the faith in which I trust; and
hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts
These pedants strive to learn and teach:
Black Arts,
Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, for-
sooth —
Let others prize: too intimate a tie

- Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites
 To help me — what are these, at best, beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
 And every object there be charged to strike,
 Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!
 I can devote myself; I have a life
 10 To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
 Think, think! the wide East, where all Wisdom sprung;
 The bright South, where she dwelt; the hopeful North,
 All are passed o'er — it lights on me! 'Tis time
 New hopes should animate the world, new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; thus shall
 The heaven reserved for us at last receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
 20 Whose beams not seldom blessed their pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.
Festus. My words have their old fate and make faint stand
 Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth —
 Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example? — seeking there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent
 — So lift yourself into their airy place,
 30 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers.
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true! — but left
 Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;
 Succeeding with new-breathed new-hearted force,
 As at old games the runner snatched the torch
 From runner still: this way success might be.
 But you have coupled with your enterprise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 40 Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
 What books are in the desert? Writes the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
- Where yours will fall the first of human feet?
 Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
 You press to read? Why turn aside from her
 To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
 Now — solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?
 Now — ruins where she paused but would not stay,
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her, 50
 She called an endless curse on, so it came:
 Or worst of all, now — men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
 Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
 Or Athens, — these shall Aureole's teachers be!
 Rejecting past example, practice, precept,
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:
 Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
 Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
 Whatever you may protest, knowledge is 60
 not
 Paramount in your love; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every source —
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
 In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.
Paracelsus. What shall I say?
 Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
 By a fire — by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
 As from without some master, so it seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
 Expresses what would I convey: but rather 70
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
 Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then
 What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
 At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
 Were laid away in some great trance — the ages
 Coming and going all the while — till dawned
 His true time's advent; and could then record
 The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed, —
 Then I might tell more of the breath so 80
 light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
 Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns

A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and
woods

Confined me — what oppressive joy was
mine

When life grew plain, and I first viewed the
thronged,

The everlasting concourse of mankind!

Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew

The purpose of the pageant, or the place

Consigned me in its ranks — while, just
awake,

10 Wonder was freshest and delight most
pure —

'Twas then that least supportable appeared

A station with the brightest of the crowd,

A portion with the proudest of them all.

And from the tumult in my breast, this
only

Could I collect, that I must thenceforth
die

Or elevate myself far, far above

The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long

At once to trample on, yet save mankind,

To make some unexampled sacrifice

20 In their behalf, to wring some wondrous
good

From heaven or earth for them, to perish,
winning

Eternal weal in the act: as who should
dare

Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,

That, all its gathered flame discharged on
him,

No storm might threaten summer's azure
sleep:

Yet never to be mixed with men so much

As to have part even in my own work, share

In my own largess. Once the feat
achieved,

I would withdraw from their officious
praise,

30 Would gently put aside their profuse
thanks.

Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a
tribe

Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to
kiss

His feet, and choose him for their king, and
yield

Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-
hills, for

His realm: and he points, smiling, to his
scarf

Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet

Gay set with twinkling stones — and to the
East,

o Where these must be displayed!

Festus. Good: let us hear
No more about your nature, "which first
shrank

"From all that marked you out apart from
men!"

Paracelsus. I touch on that; these
words but analyse

The first mad impulse: 'twas as brief as
fond,

For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a shape

Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and
full eye.

Well pleased was I their state should thus
at once

Interpret my own thoughts: — "Behold
the clue

"To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine 50

"To do, these have accomplished: we are
peers.

"They know and therefore rule: I, too,
will know!"

You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom
fame

Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view

Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
But since they strove I strove. Then came

a slow

And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim 60

counts

A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
Or staggered only at his own vast wits;

While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur
over

That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed
myself

As weak compared with them, yet felt
somehow

A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me; and this lasted till one night

When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said — "Seest 70

thou not,

"Desponding child, whence spring defeat
and loss?

"Even from thy strength. Consider: hast
thou gazed

"Presumptuously on wisdom's counte-
nance,

"No veil between; and can thy faltering
hands,

"Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
"Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do

"Whom radiance ne'er distracted? Live
their life

"If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose
their eyes

"Unfed by splendour. Let each task
present

"Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy 80
gifts

"In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
"But have some idol of thine own to dress

"With their array. Know, not for know-
 ing's sake,
 "But to become a star to men for ever;
 "Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it
 brings,
 "The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds:
 "Look one step onward, and secure that
 step!"
 And I smiled as one never smiles but once,
 Then first discovering my own aim's ex-
 tent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works of
 God,
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse
 o With the human mind; I understood, no
 less,
 My fellows' studies, whose true worth I
 saw,
 But smiled not, well aware who stood by
 me.
 And softer came the voice — "There is a
 way:
 "'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, im-
 bued
 "With frailty — hopeless, if indulgence
 first
 "Have ripened inborn germs of sin to
 strength:
 "Wilt thou adventure for my sake and
 man's,
 "Apart from all reward?" And last it
 breathed —
 "Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,
 20 "Be sure, even to the end!" — I answered
 not,
 Knowing him. As he spoke, I was en-
 dued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will;
 And when he ceased, my brow was sealed
 his own.
 If there took place no special change in me,
 How comes it all things wore a different
 hue
 Thenceforward? — pregnant with vast
 consequence,
 Teeming with grand result, loaded with
 fate?
 So that when, quailing at the mighty range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I
 haste
 30 To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone — at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
 I ask not: but unless God send his hail
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
 40 He guides me and the bird. In his good
 time!
Michal. Vex him no further, Festus; it
 is so!

Festus. Just thus you help me ever.
 This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
 Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
 You may have purer views than theirs, per-
 haps,
 But they were famous in their day — the
 proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they
 lend.
Paracelsus. Their light! the sum of all
 is briefly this:
 They laboured and grew famous, and the 54
 fruits
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
 Given over to a blind and endless strife
 With evils, what of all their lore abates?
 No; I reject and spurn them utterly
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed
 eye,
 While in the distance heaven is blue above
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned
 tarns?
Festus. And yet
 As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.
 Men have set out as gallantly to seek 60
 Their ruin. I have heard of such: your-
 self
 Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.
Michal. Nay, Festus, when but as the
 pilgrims faint
 Through the drear way, do you expect to
 see
 Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?
Paracelsus. Ay, sounds it not like some
 old well-known tale?
 For me, I estimate their works and them
 So rightly, that at times I almost dream
 I too have spent a life the sages' way,
 And tread once more familiar paths. Per- 70
 chance
 I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
 Ages ago; and in that act, a prayer
 For one more chance went up so earnest, so
 Instinct with better light let in by death,
 That life was blotted out — not so com-
 pletely
 But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
 Dim memories, as now, when once more
 seems
 The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
 Is foolish, and only means — the flesh I
 wear,
 The earth I tread, are not more clear to me 80
 Than my belief, explained to you or no.
Festus. And who am I, to challenge and
 dispute
 That clear belief? I will divest all fear.
Michal. Then Aureole is God's com-
 missary! he shall
 Be great and grand — and all for us!
Paracelsus. No, sweet!

Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
 'Tis well; but there our intercourse must end:
 I never will be served by those I serve.
Festus. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
 Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter
 This scorn while by our side and loving us:
 'Tis but a spot as yet: but it will break
 Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
 How can that course be safe which from the first
 Produces carelessness to human love?
 It seems you have abjured the helps which men
 Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
 Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe
 This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be
 That popular praise would little instigate
 Your efforts, nor particular approval
 Reward you; put reward aside; alone
 You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
 None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
 None share your triumph: still you must retain
 Some one to cast your glory on, to share
 Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
 I would encircle me with love, and raise
 A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
 Impossible for me to fail, so watched
 By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
 They should ward off fate's envy — the great gift,
 Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
 Being so a gift to them as well as me.
 If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
 How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!
Michal. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
 Without first calling, in my fancy, both
 To listen by my side — even I! And you?
 Do you not feel this? Say that you feel this!
Paracelsus. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
 Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
 A further strengthening in these goodly helps!
 My course allures for its own sake, its sole
 Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boast of mine
 Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
 Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak."
 If weak, more need to give myself entire
 To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . .
 No matter! I deny myself but little

In waiving all assistance save its own.
 Would there were some real sacrifice to make!
 Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
 While I must be content with keeping mine.
Festus. But do not cut yourself from 50
 human weal!
 You cannot thrive — a man that dares affect
 To spend his life in service to his kind
 For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
 By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No —
 There are strange punishments for such.
 Give up
 (Although no visible good flow thence) some part
 Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
 Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
 Say, say almost to God — "I have done all
 "For her, not for myself!" 60
Paracelsus. And who but lately
 Was to rejoice in my success like you?
 Whom should I love but both of you?
Festus. I know not:
 But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine
 You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
 And this the cause — I can no longer seek
 To overlook the truth, that there would be
 A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
 Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:
 A being knowing not what love is.
 Hear me!
 You are endowed with faculties which 70
 bear
 Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
 To summon meaner spirits to do their will
 And gather round them at their need; inspiring
 Such with a love themselves can never feel,
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
 I know not if you joy in this or no,
 Or ever dream that common men can live
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make
 Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must 80
 taste
 Or die: and this strange quality accords,
 I know not how, with you; sits well upon
 That luminous brow, though in another it
 scowls
 An eating brand, a shame. I dare not
 judge you.
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
 There's no alternative — I own you one
 Of higher order, under other laws
 Than bind us; therefore, curb not one
 bold glance!

'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us
all . . .

¶ *Michal.* Stay with us, Aureole! cast
those hopes away,

And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,
Man should be humble; you are very
proud:

And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues
for such!

— Warns me to have in dread no quick
repulse,

No slow defeat, but a complete success:

You will find all you seek, and perish so!

Paracelsus [after a pause]. Are these the
barren firstfruits of my quest?

16 Is love like this the natural lot of all?

How many years of pain might one such
hour

¶ O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest
Festus,

¶ What shall I say, if not that I desire

To justify your love; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.

See, the great moon! and ere the mottled
owls

Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this —

If I am like to compass what I seek

20 By the untried career I choose; and then,
If that career, making but small account

Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul: for thus

I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,

The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But,

friends,

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may

believe.

30 There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around

Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it
in,

This perfect, clear perception — which is
truth.

A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error: and to

KNOW

Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may

escape,

Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly

30 The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its

spring

And source within us; where broods
radiance vast,

To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance — for hitherto your

sage,
Even as he knows not how those beams are

born.

As little knows he what unlocks their
fount:

And men have oft grown old among their
books

To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what

long years

Of unremitted labour ne'er performed: 54
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle

day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free

As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last
To truth — produced mysteriously as cape

Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,

The lowest as the highest? some slight
film

The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the

sage

Some film removed, the happy outlet 60
whence

Truth issues proudly? See this soul of
ours!

How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back

compelled.

By age and waste, set free at last by death:
Why is it, flesh enthralled it or enthrones?

What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth

And power emerge, but also when strange
chance

Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body — hunger, 70

watching,
Excess or languor — oftenest death's ap-

proach,
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall

crawl

Through life surrounded with all stirring
things,

Unmoved; and he goes mad: and from
the wreck

Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.

Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the

flesh

Accloys the spirit! We may not be
doomed

To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest 84
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants,

God,
But elevate the race at once! We ask

To put forth just our strength, our human
strength,

All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike all eagle-eyed, true-hearted —

See if we cannot beat thine angels yet!
Such is my task. I go to gather this

The sacred knowledge, here and there dis-
persea

About the world, long lost or never found.

And why should I be sad or lorn of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from
God's,
Or, finding they are one, why dare mis-
trust?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like
me?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from his, like those who set them-
selves
To find the nature of the spirit they
bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous
dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast de-
sires, —
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned;
but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth!
I am priest!
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like those who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though
I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such
helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the
rest —
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved. Till then — till
then . . .
Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve
shall bring
The stately lady's presence whom he
loves —
The broken sleep of the fisher whose
rough coat
Enwraps the queenly pearl — these are
faint types!
See, see, they look on me: I triumph now!
But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say —
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?
Festus. I do believe!
Michal. I ever did believe!
Paracelsus. Those words shall never
fade from out my brain!
This earnest of the end shall never fade!
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear
Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One — when, a beggar, he prepares to
plunge,

One — when, a prince, he rises with his
pearl?
Festus, I plunge!
Festus. We wait you when you rise!

II. — PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE. — *Constantinople; the house of a
Greek Conjuror. 1521.*

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
With all that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked 50
runs
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight! 'Tis done at
last.
Strange — and the juggles of a sallow
cheat
Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon
cloud
Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a
mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan
for once
The heights already reached, without
regard
To the extent above; fairly compute 60
All I have clearly gained; for once exclud-
ing
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude
hopes:
And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus
much
Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum: and here amid the
scrawled
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac,¹ lie my life's results! 70
A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many
lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired; he
was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinise the little gained: the whole

¹ Birthday-book maker, γενεθλιακόν.

- Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
 ♣ And a mad lover's ditty — there it lies.
 ♣ And yet those blottings chronicle a life —
 A whole life, and my life! Nothing to do,
 No problem for the fancy, but a life
 Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does
 this
 Remembrancer set down concerning
 "life"?
 ♣ "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty
 dream,"
 ♣ "It is the echo of time; and he whose
 heart
 "Beat first beneath a human heart, whose
 speech
 "Was copied from a human tongue, can
 never
 "Recall when he was living yet knew not
 this.
 "Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
 "Till some one hour's experience shows
 what nothing,
 "It seemed, could clearer show; and ever
 after,
 "An altered brow and eye and gait and
 speech
 ♣ "Attest that now he knows the adage true,
 ♣ "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty
 dream."
 20 Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same
 hour
 As well as any: now, let my time be!
 Now! I can go no farther; well or ill,
 'Tis done. I must desist and take my
 chance.
 I cannot keep on the stretch: 'tis no back-
 shrinking —
 For let but some assurance beam, some
 close
 To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
 At any price, though closing it, I die.
 Else, here I pause. The old Greek's
 prophecy
 Is like to turn out true: "I shall not quit
 30 "His chamber till I know what I desire!"
 Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea?
 An end, a rest! strange how the notion,
 once
 Encountered, gathers strength by moments!
 Rest!
 Where has it kept so long? this throbbing
 brow
 To cease, this beating heart to cease, all
 cruel
 And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare
 let down
 My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare
 unnerve
 My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know
 my place,
 My portion, my reward, even my failure,
 Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose 41
 myself
 Among the common creatures of the world,
 To draw some gain from having been a
 man,
 Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
 Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
 And power and recompense . . . I hoped
 that once!
 What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
 Been undergone for this? This the
 request
 My labour qualified me to present
 With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
 Slightly through my task, and so judged 50
 fit
 To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
 My sole concern to exculpate myself,
 End things or mend them, — why, I could
 not choose
 A humbler mood to wait for the event!
 No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
 At worst I have performed my share of
 the task:
 ♣ The rest is God's concern; mine, merely
 this,
 ♣ To know that I have obstinately held
 ♣ By my own work. The mortal whose
 brave foot
 ♣ Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court 50 60
 far
 That he descries at length the shrine of
 shrines,
 Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
 Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten
 now
 Upon him, fairly past their power; no,
 no —
 ♣ He must not stagger, faint, fall down at
 last,
 Having a charm to baffle them; behold,
 He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
 Screne amid the echoes, beams and
 glooms!
 If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
 The god of the place to ban and blast him 70
 there,
 Both well! What's failure or success to
 me?
 I have subdued my life to the one purpose
 Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,
 No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.
 ♣ Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
 The obligation of my strictest vow,
 The contemplation of my wildest bond,
 Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
 But in its actual state, consenting fully
 All passionate impulses its soil was formed 80
 To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not

- The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it
was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now
it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless
then.
- I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at
first,
- If not love, say, like love: there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after know-
ledge
- Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg which the
Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?
- And Festus — my poor Festus, with his
praise
And counsel and grave fears — where is
he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride?
I surely loved them — that last night, at
least,
When we . . . gone! gone! the better.
I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth
- Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their
birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have
gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea:
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure; till one
morn
- I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on
earth.
- And since that morn all life has been for-
gotten:
All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end: one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept
up
- Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence: life, death, light and
shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare recep-
tacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight:
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
- For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit
and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and
tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid
gold —
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe;
I see the robe now — then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of
land:
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too!
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow
rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light
From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by the
hand;
Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length:
God may take pleasure in confounding
pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and
base —
I am here, in short: so little have I paused
Throughout! I never glanced behind to
know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am — what I am!
- Oh, bitter; very bitter!
And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning the
first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and
gone,
In tears which burn! Would I were sure
to win
Some startling secret in their stead, a
tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or
breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they
change
To opal shafts! — only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as
ever!
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's
sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed?
O God, the despicable heart of us!
Shut out this hideous mockery from my
heart!
'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump;

At all events, once launched, to hold straight on:

For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of
such

Full consummation! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength; and that is
gone

Already in the getting these you boast.
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should
say —

"Great master, we are here indeed,
dragged forth

"To light; this hast thou done: be glad!
Now, seek

10 "The strength to use which thou hast
spent in getting!"

And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns
not!

And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
Mistaken the wild nursing of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and power, and
recompense!

20 Was she who glided through my room of
nights,

Who laid my head on her soft knees and
smoothed

The damp locks, — whose sly soothings
just began

When my sick spirit craved repose awhile —
God! was I fighting sleep off for death's
sake?

God! Thou art mind! Unto the master-
mind

Mind should be precious. Spare my mind
alone!

All else I will endure; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me
down,

I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;

30 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die;
And if no trace of my career remain

Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers level with the air,
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,

My once proud spirit forsake me at the
last,

Hast thou done well by me? So do not
thou!

* Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be
crushed!

Hold me before the frequency of thy
seraphs

And say — "I crushed him, lest he should
disturb

40 "My law. Men must not know their
strength: behold

"Weak and alone, how he had raised
himself!"

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost
intend

To work man's welfare through my weak
endeavour,

To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown, to smile,
and guide

This puny hand and let the work so
wrought

Be styled my work, — hear me! I covet
not

An influx of new power, an angel's soul: 50
It were no marvel then — but I have
reached

Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!

Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one!

That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain
way

To mould them, and completing them,
possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this 60
Had reached me: a fire-labrum¹ was not
deemed

Too much for the old founder of these
walls.

Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my
course

So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am

worn;

But who clothes summer, who is life itself?
God, that created all things, can renew!

And then, though after-life to please me 70
now

Must have no likeness to the past, what
hinders

Reward from springing out of toil, as
changed

As bursts the flower from earth and root
and stalk?

What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected? let me know that first!

No man could ever offend as I have
done . . .

[A voice from within.]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard

Long ago, but all too low,

So that scarce a care it stirred

¹ The sacred standard used by Constantine
after his conversion.

If the voice were real or no:
 I heard it in my youth when first
 The waters of my life outburst:
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 That voice, still low, but fatal-clear —
 As if all poets, God ever meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak
 endeavour,
 So, mourn cast off by him for ever, —
 As if these leaned in airy ring
 To take me; this the song they sing.

"Lost, lost! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home.
 Come, come! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.

sank in those old years,
 who bid thee, come! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
 And altogether we, thy peers,
 Will pardon crave for thee, the last
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
 With those who watch but work no more,
 Who gaze on life but live no more.
 Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
 The message which our lips, too weak,
 Refused to utter, — shouldst redeem
 Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace
 Where the richness ran to flowers:
 Couldst not sing one song for grace?
 Not make one blossom man's and ours?
 Must one more recreant to his race
 Die with unexerted powers,
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound?
 Anguish! ever and for ever;
 Still beginning, ending never.
 Yet, lost and last one, come!
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee night and day?

Thou wast blind as we were dumb:
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Shall next thy post of life inherit —
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not
 save!"

APRILE enters.

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at
 last?

Art thou the poet who shall save the
 world?

Thy hand to mine! Stay, fix thine eyes on
 mine!

Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes
 on mine!

Paracelsus. Ha, ha! why crouchest
 not? Am I not king?

So torture is not wholly unavailing!

Have my fierce spasms compelled thee
 from thy lair?

Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more
 firm,

Who robes him in my robe and grasps my
 crown

For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?

I scarcely trusted God with the surmise

That such might come, and thou didst hear
 the while!

Aprile. Thine eyes are lustreless to
 mine; my hair

Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.

Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood
 her lips,

The siren's! Yes, 'tis like thou hast
 attained!

Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou
 comest?

I thought thy solemn songs would have
 their meed

In after-time; that I should hear the earth
 Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,

While I was laid forgotten in my grave. 84

Paracelsus. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am
 not thy dupe!

Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap

The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious

striver,

As if, except through me, thou hast
 searched or striven!

Ay, tell the world! Degrade me after all,
 To an aspirant after fame, not truth —

To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

Aprile. Nay, sing them to me; I shall
 envy not:

Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will
 sit

Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
 And worship thee, as I had ne'er been

meant
 To fill thy throne: but none shall ever
 know!

Sing to me; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-

shaft
 Reveals by some chance blaze its parent
 fount

After long time: so thou reveal'st my soul.
 All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!

Paracelsus. (His secret! I shall get his secret — fool!)

I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?

Aprile. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!

Paracelsus. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.

Aprile. Thou deem'st

That — born a spirit, dowered even as thou,

Born for thy fate — because I could not curb

My yearnings to possess at once the full

Enjoyment, but neglected all the means

Of realising even the frailest joy,

Gathering no fragments to appease my want,

Yet nursing up that want till thus I die —

Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure march

O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,

Neglecting nought below for aught above,

Despising nothing and ensuring all —

Nor that I could (my time to come again)

Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.

Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well

I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!

Oh ye who armed me at such cost,

How shall I look on all of ye

With your gifts even yet on me?

Paracelsus. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck

creature after all!

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den:

They spread contagion, doubtless: yet he seemed

To echo one foreboding of my heart

So truly, that . . . no matter! How he stands

With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair

Which turns to it as if they were akin:

And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue

Nearly set free, so far they rise above

The painful fruitless striving of the brow

And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set

In slow despondency's eternal sigh!

Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm!

Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Aprile. I would love infinitely, and be loved.

First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,

The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted

Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph

Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree

Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,

Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king

Regal for his white locks; no youth who stands

Silent and very calm amid the throng,

His right hand ever hid beneath his robe

Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver,

No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils

Given by a god for love of her — too hard! 50

Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,

Would I express and clothe it in its right form,

Or blend with others struggling in one form,

Or show repressed by an ungainly form.

Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit

With a fit frame to execute its will —

Even unconsciously to work its will —

You should be moved no less beside some strong

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,

Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it 60

With its own splendour! — All this I would do:

And I would say, this done, "His sprites created,

"God grants to each a sphere to be its world,

"Appointed with the various objects needed

"To satisfy its own peculiar want;

"So, I create a world for these my shapes

"Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!"

And, at the word, I would contrive and paint

Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,

Lakes which, when morn breaks on their 70 quivering bed,

Blaze like a wyvern¹ flying round the sun,

And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking

A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice

Around them, and fare onward — all to hold

The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone:

Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,

Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,

Marts, theatres and wharfs — all filled with men,

Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,

When those who looked on, pined to hear 80 the hopes

And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,

I would throw down the pencil as the chisel.

And I would speak; no thought which ever stirred

¹ Dragon.

A human breast should be untold; all
passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well:
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
10 This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music,
breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
Having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die: preserving so throughout my
course
God full on me, as I was full on men:
He would approve my prayer, "I have gone
through
20 "The loveliness of life; create for me
"If not for men, or take me to thyself,
"Eternal, infinite love!"
If thou hast ne'er
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou
art
No king of mine.
Paracelsus. Ah me!
Aprile. But thou art here!
Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the
bliss
Were blind with glory; now grow mad to
grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should
claim,
30 Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time: nay,
listen!
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so
great,
Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task
undone.
We will be wise in time: what though our
work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way? 'Twere little
praise
40 Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework. Had we
means
Answering to our mind! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle: how rear
thereon

My palace? Branching palms the props
shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling; gems are for the
East;
Who heeds them? I can pass them.
Serpents' scales,
And painted birds' down, furs and fishes, 50
skins
Must help me; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to: still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
"Had I green jars of malachite, this way
"I'd range them: where those sea-shells
glisten above,
"Cressets¹ should hang, by right: this
way we set
"The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
"Woven of fern and rush and blossoming
flag."
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some 60
slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own
home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection — with what
joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of
God,
To let my followers know what such things
are!
I would adventure nobly for their sakes:
When nights were still, and still the moan- 70
ing sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once
more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten
back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or
true.
"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far
for them,
"Past the high rocks the haunt of doves,
the mounds
"Of red earth from whose sides strange
trees grow out,
"Past tracks of milk-white minute blinding
sand,
"Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly 80
"Gathered these magic herbs, berry and
bud,
"In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
"But happy plucking them at any price.
"To me, who have seen them bloom in
their own soil,
"They are scarce lovely: plait and wear
them, you!

¹ Lanterns.

- "And guess, from what they are, the
 springs that fed them,
 "The stars that sparkled o'er them, night
 by night,
 "The snakes that travelled far to sip their
 dew!"
 Thus for my higher loves; and thus even
 weakness
 Would win me honour. But not these
 alone
 Should claim my care; for common life,
 its wants
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous
 hues:
 The loveliest hind should not possess a hope,
 A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
 Than he his own heart's language. I
 would live
 For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
 As a discoverer's memory is attached
 To all he finds; they should be mine
 henceforth,
 Imbued with me, though free to all before:
 For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems.
 Nor this
 Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
 Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit,
 clothed
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame
 spirit:
 20 As one spring wind unbinds the mountain
 snow
 And comforts violets in their hermitage.
 But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming
 me?
 Didst thou, when nerving thee to this at-
 tempt,
 Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide
 hall,
 Dazzled by shapes that filled its length
 with light,
 Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not
 obey,
 That will not wait thy summons, will not
 rise
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and
 hand
 30 Can well transfer their loveliness, but
 crowd
 By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns,
 and ne'er
 Resolve to single out one, though the rest
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
 In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal
 power?
 And, this determined, wast thou ne'er
 seduced
 By memories and regrets and passionate
 love,
 To glance once more farewell? and did
 their eyes
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, 40
 until
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their
 feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare
 ever
 Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or
 when years
 Had passed and still their love possessed
 thee wholly,
 When from without some murmur startled
 thee
 Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break
 those spells
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced, 50
 And to that end, select some shape once
 more?
 And did not mist-like influences, thick
 films,
 Faint memories of the rest that charmed so
 long
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear
 thee off,
 As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who
 treads
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear,
 through storm?
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
 Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord!
Paracelsus. Clasp me not thus,
 Aprile! That the truth should reach me 60
 thus!
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I
 faint!
Aprile. My king! and envious thoughts
 could outrage thee?
 Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
 In thy success, as thou! Let our God's
 praise
 Go bravely through the world at last!
 What care
 Through me or thee? I feel thy breath:
 Why, tears?
 Tears in the darkness, and from thee to
 me?
Paracelsus. Love me henceforth, Aprile
 while I learn
 To love; and, merciful God, forgive us
 both!
 We wake at length from weary dreams; 70
 but both
 Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and
 drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled
 still.
 I too have sought to know as thou to
 LOVE —

Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
 What penance canst devise for both of us?
Aprile. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness! Even
 Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face!
 O poet, think of me, and sing of me!
 But to have seen thee and to die so soon!
Paracelsus. Die not, *Aprile!* We must never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? never!
 Till thou the lover, know; and I, the knower,
 Love — until both are saved. *Aprile,* hear!
 We will accept our gains, and use them — now!
 God, he will die upon my breast! *Aprile!*
Aprile. To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.
 Hush! hush!
 Ha! go you ever girt about
 With phantoms, powers? I have created such,
 But these seem real as I.
Paracelsus. Whom can you see
 Through the accursed darkness?
Aprile. Stay; I know,
 I know them: who should know them well as I?
 White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!
Paracelsus. Let him but live, and I have my reward!
Aprile. Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,
 Who in his person acts his own creations.
 Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!
Paracelsus. Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,
 To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
 And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late.
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
 Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean thus,
 And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word
 Of all your speech, one little word, *Aprile!*
Aprile. No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you!
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.
Paracelsus. Thy spirit, at least, *Aprile!* Let me love!
 I have attained, and now I may depart.

III. — PARACELSUS.

SCENE. — *Basil; a chamber in the house of*
PARACELSUS. 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Paracelsus. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out!
Festus. True, true!
 'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change
 Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
 And soul to soul — all cares, far-looking fears,
 Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
 By your long absence, should be cast away
 Forgotten in this glad un hoped renewal
 Of our affections.
Paracelsus. Oh, omit not aught
 Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
 Affection: spare not that! Only forget
 The honours and the glories and what not,
 It pleases you to tell profusely out.
Festus. Nay, even your honours, in a 50
 sense, I waive:
 The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
 Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
 And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
 Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
 Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
 As best I could the promptings of my spirit
 Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
 To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
 Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
 Has won for you.
Paracelsus. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
 Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
 Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?
Festus. Just so.
Paracelsus. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
 Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
 Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
 Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
 In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
 The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice
 Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
 Sat conning some rare scroll from Tri- 70
 them's shelves
 Much wondering notes so simple could divert

My mind from study. Those were happy days.

Respect all such as sing when all alone!

Festus. Scarcely alone: her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her.

Paracelsus. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:

A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct:
No change, no change! Not but this
added grace

May blend and harmonize with its com-
peers,

And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long
since.

So, Michal — you have said she thinks of
me?

Festus. O very proud will Michal be of
you!

Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your
presumed

Adventure, or devising its reward;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of
hope.

For it was strange how, even when most
secure

In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it
seemed

A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incom-
plete —

Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent — but, said or unsaid,
felt

To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the
fears —

How you would laugh should I recount
them now!

I still predicted your return at last

With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,

All Trithem's wondrous troop; did one
of which

Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.

Michal was sure some woman, long ere
this,

As beautiful as you were sage, had
loved . . .

Paracelsus. Far-seeing, truly, to discern
so much

In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw restless boy!

Festus. Oh, no: the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!

Can I forget the anxious voice which said

"Festus, have thoughts like these ere
shaped themselves

"In other brains than mine? have their
possessors

"Existed in like circumstance? were they
weak

"As I, or ever constant from the first,
Despising youth's allurements and re-
jecting

"As spider-films the shackles I endure?
"Is there hope for me?" — and I answered
gravely

As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remem-
ber,

For all your glorious . . .

Paracelsus. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands — nay, touch them, they are 50
mine! Recall

With all the said recallings, times when
thus

To lay them by your own ne'er turned you
pale

As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Festus. Why — why —
Something must be subtracted from success
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupu-
lous, truly,

Who should object such drawbacks.
Still, still, Aureole,

You are changed, very changed! 'Twere
losing nothing

To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won
meed.

Paracelsus. My friend! you seek my 60
pleasure, past a doubt:

You will best gain your point, by talking,
not

Of me, but of yourself.

Festus. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children?
Sure

You know, by this, full well how Aennchen
looks

Gravely, while one disparts her thick
brown hair;

And Aureole's glee when some stray
gannet builds

Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small
hope

Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake. Sigh not! 'tis too much
to ask

That all we love should reach the same 70
proud fate.

But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart de-
spise . . .

Paracelsus. Festus, strange secrets are
let out by death

Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
And I am death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks
since,

Warped even from his go-cart to one end —

The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean
trick
He left untried, and truly well-nigh
wormed
All traces of God's finger out of him:
Then died, grown old. And just an hour
before,
Having lain long with blank and soulless
eyes,
He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
Said that in spite of thick air and closed
doors
God told him it was June; and he knew
well,
Without such telling, harebells grew in
June;
And all that kings could ever give or take
Would not be precious as those blooms to
him.
Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies,¹ eyes that laugh, bear beauty's
prize
From violets, eyes that dream — (your
Michal's choice) —
Than all fools find to wonder at in me
Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness,
No self-complacency, itching to turn,
Vary and view its pleasure from all points,
And, in this instance, willing other men
May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
The realness of the very joy it tastes.
What should delight me like the news of
friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their
flight?
Ofter than you had wasted thought on me
Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
God knows I need such! — So, you heard
me speak?
Festus. Speak? when?
Paracelsus. When but this morning
at my class?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw
you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here? — that 'tis part of my
proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,
To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basil's benches long unused
To crack beneath such honour?
Festus. I was there;
I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen? — too in-
tent

On gathering from the murmurs of the
crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes!
What can I learn about your powers? but
they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual
state,
Your actual value; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway as
one!
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .
Paracelsus. Stop, o' God's name: the
thing 's by no means yet
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's
labour
— At least in substance? Nought so
worth the gaining
As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all
due
Precision and emphasis — you, beside, are
clearly
Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool — allowed to
be
A notable advantage.
Festus. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!
Paracelsus. I laugh? Ha, ha! thank
heaven,
I charge you, if't be so! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like. 6c
No less,
However, I forego that luxury
Since it alarms the friend who brings it
back.
True, laughter like my own must echo
strangely
To thinking men; a smile were better
far;
So, make me smile! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are
born
Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's
souls
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their
flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven, 7c
And in the earth a stage for altars only.
Never change, *Festus*: I say, never
change!
Festus. My God, if he be wretched
after all!
Paracelsus. When last we parted, *Fes-*
tus, you declared,
— Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered
words
I have preserved. She told me she be-
lieved
I should succeed (meaning, that in the
search
I then engaged in, I should meet success)
And yet be wretched: now, she augured
false.

¹ Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso mul-
tum familiaris. — DORN.

Festus. Thank heaven! but you spoke
strangely: could I venture
To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might
find
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could
move
Such earnest mood in you? Fear not,
dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own!

Paracelsus. And this for ever!
For ever! gull who may, they will be
gulled!
They will not look nor think; 'tis nothing
new
10 In them: but surely he is not of them!
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned,
you —
Though all beside were sand-blind — you,
my friend,
Would look at me, once close, with pierc-
ing eye
Untroubled by the false glare that con-
founds
A weaker vision: would remain serene,
Though singular amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere
this,

To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
30 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching
me
Be fixed much longer; for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern
books

30 Say, the fallen prince of morning some
short space
Remained unchanged in semblance: nay,
his brow
Was hued with triumph: every spirit then
Praising, his heart on flame the while: —
a tale!

Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?
Festus. Some foul deed sullies then a
life which else

Were raised supreme?

Paracelsus. Good: I do well, most well!
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret
themselves

With what is past their power to compre-
hend?

I should not strive now: only, having
nursed

40 The faint surmise that one yet walked the
earth,

One, at least, not the utter fool of show,

Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone:
One who, in youth, found wise enough to
choose

The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for
him

The perilous path, foresaw its destiny, 50
And warned the weak one in such tender
words,

Such accents — his whole heart in every
tone —

That oft their memory comforted that
friend

When it by right should have increased
despair:

— Having believed, I say, that this one
man

Could never lose the light thus from the
first

His portion — how should I refuse to grieve
At even my gain if it disturb our old
Relation, if it make me out more wise?

Therefore, once more reminding him how 60
well

He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain
words,

You were deceived, and thus were you de-
ceived —

I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the
world!

Festus. You surely do not mean to
banter me?

Paracelsus. You know, or — if you have
been wise enough

To cleanse your memory of such matters — 70
knew,

As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing then only when mischance re-
tarded

Its progress. That was in those Würzburg
days!

Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
41 have pursued this plan with all my
strength;

And having failed therein most signally, 80
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear

As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have
right

To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,

Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend:
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling
me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy — but he is my friend!
10 Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;
That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,
Some sunny morning — Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned
clerks,

Here (Ecclampadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all
squeezed

And staring, — that the zany of the show,
Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
20 His trappings with a grace but seldom
judged

Expedient in such cases: — the grim smile
That will go round! Is it not therefore
best

To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way? Where are the signs I
seek,

The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks? Why, this will never
do!

Festus. These are foul vapours, Aure-
ole; nought beside!

The effect of watching, study, weariness.
Were there a spark of truth in the confuser
30 Of these wild words, you would not out-
rage thus

Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er
regard

These wanderings, bred of faintness and
much study.

'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to
me,

To Michal's friend.

Paracelsus. I have said it, dearest
Festus!

For the manner, 'tis ungracious probably;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one
day,

And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought
best

To keep that off as long as possible.

Do you wonder still?

Festus. No; it must oft fall out
40 That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.

Paracelsus. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last! 'Tis so with all!
First, they set down all progress as a
dream;
And next, when he whose quick discom- 50
fiture

Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career, — be-
hold,

They look for every inch of ground to
vanish

Beneath his tread, so sure they spy suc-
cess!

Festus. Few doubtful steps? when
death retires before

Your presence — when the noblest of man-
kind,

Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour,

raise
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?
When men in racking pain may purchase 60
dreams

Of what delights them most, swooning at
once

Into a sea of bliss or raft along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?

When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered
soul?

When . . .

Paracelsus. When and where, the devil,
did you get

This notable news?

Festus. Even from the common voice;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them 70
To magic and such folly.

Paracelsus. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort
doubtless

In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged
worth

The devil's tempting . . . I offend: for-
give me,

And rest content. Your prophecy on the
whole

Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; and hereupon
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago 80
(The prophet!) I should fail — and I have
failed.

Festus. You mean to tell me, then, the
hopes which fed

Your youth have not been realized as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .

Paracelsus. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little mat-
ter

Whether those hopes were mad, — the
aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I
fail.

And now methinks 'twere best to change a
theme

I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves
at fault,

As now: this morning's strange encounter
— you

10 Beside me once again! you, whom I
guessed

Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at peace,
To judge by any good their prayers effect.
I knew you would have helped me — why
not he,

My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close?
How goes it with April? Ah, they miss

20 Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,
Our martyrs for the world's sake; heaven
shuts fast:

The poor mad poet is howling by this time!
Since you are my sole friend then, here or
there,

I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens; they have had their
vent,

And now forget them. Do the rear-mice
still

Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Festus.

Trifle not:

30 Answer me, for my sake alone! You
smiled

Just now, when I supposed some deed, un-
worthy

Yourself, might blot the else so bright re-
sult;

* Yet if your motives have continued pure,
Your will unflinching, and in spite of this,

* You have experienced a defeat, why then
I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
From contest — mortal hearts are not so
fashioned —

But surely you would ne'ertheless with-
draw.

You sought not fame nor gain nor even
love,

40 No end distinct from knowledge, — I repeat
Your very words: once satisfied that know-
ledge

Is a mere dream, you would announce as
much,

* Yourself the first. But how is the event?

* You are defeated — and I find you here!

Paracelsus. As though "here" did not
signify defeat!

I spoke not of my little labours here,
But of the break-down of my general aims:
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards 5
worse,

As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice. A professorship
At Basle! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained

Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands, —
Be it far from me to deny my power

To fill the petty circle allotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host

Of honours thence accruing. So, take 60
notice,

This jewel dangling from my neck pre-
serves

The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to
come:

And all through a pure whim. He had
eased the earth

For me, but that the droll despair which
seized

The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physi-
cian,

Whose most infallible nostrum was at
fault;

There quaked the astrologer, whose horo-
scope

Had promised him interminable years; 70
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's
mouth

With some undoubted relic — a sudary¹
Of the Virgin; while another piebald

knave

Of the same brotherhood (he loved them
ever)

Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,

Had stunk the patient dead ere he could
groan.

I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the

first gust

Of stench from the ingredients just alight 80
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my
sword,

Not easily laid: and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.

A day — and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose

spite

Had near availed to stop the blessed
effects

Of the doctor's nostrum which, well
seconded

¹ Napkin.

By the sudary, and most by the costly
 smoke —
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent
 up
 Hard by in the abbey — raised the prince
 to life:
 To the great reputation of the seer
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recom-
 pense —
 Much largess from his highness to the
 monks —
 And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 10 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics
 Remanded till God's mercy should be
 shown
 Touching his sickness: last of all were
 joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk
 To swell the complement by seizing me
 Who — doubtless some rank sorcerer —
 endeavoured
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
 The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by
 help
 Of certain devils 'dwelling in his sword.
 20 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an
 earnest
 Of further favours. This one case may
 serve
 To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So, let them pass. Those shelves support
 a pile
 Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy;
 They authorize some honour; ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent;
 He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,
 30 And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from
 the dead."
 I weary you, I see. I merely sought
 To show, there's no great wonder after
 all
 That, while I fill the class-room and attract
 A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay,
 And therefore need not scruple to accept
 The utmost they can offer, if I please:
 For 'tis but right the world should be pre-
 pared
 To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.
 40 Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
 Devoured, received in place of his lost
 limb
 Some virtue or other — cured disease, I
 think;
 You mind the fables we have read together.
Festus. You do not think I comprehend
 a word.
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt
 enough

To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious
 breath;
 But surely you must feel how vague and
 strange
 These speeches sound.
Paracelsus. Well, then: you know my
 hopes;
 I am assured, at length, those hopes were
 vain;
 That truth is just as far from me as ever; 54
 That I have thrown my life away; that
 sorrow
 On that account is idle, and further effort
 To mend and patch what's marred beyond
 repairing,
 As useless: and all this was taught your
 friend
 By the convincing good old-fashioned
 method
 Of force — by sheer compulsion. Is that
 plain?
Festus. Dear Aureole, can it be my
 fears were just?
 God wills not . . .
Paracelsus. Now, 'tis this I most
 admire —
 The constant talk men of your stamp keep
 up
 Of God's will, as they style it; one would 64
 swear
 Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
 And see the will in question characterized
 On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise
 to moot
 Such topics: doubts are many and faith
 is weak.
 I know as much of any will of God
 As knows some dumb and tortured brute
 what Man,
 His stern lord, wills from the perplexing
 blows
 That plague him every way; but there, of
 course,
 Where least he suffers, longest he remains —
 My case; and for such reasons I plod on, 74
 Subdued but not convinced. I know as
 little
 Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
 Better things in my youth. I simply know
 I am no master here, but trained and beaten
 Into the path I tread; and here I stay,
 Until some further intimation reach me,
 Like an obedient drudge. Though I pre-
 fer
 To view the whole thing as a task imposed
 Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be
 done —
 Yet, I deny not, there is made provision 84
 Of joys which tastes less jaded might
 affect;
 Nay, some which please me too, for all
 my pride —
 Pleasures that once were pains: the iron
 ring

- Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
 Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
 A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
 Or spurned before; such now supply the place
 Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods
 Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
 Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
 Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.
Festus. If I interpret well your words, I own
- 10 It troubles me but little that your aims.
 Vast in their dawning and most likely grown
 Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
 Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;
 Because they are too glorious to be gained,
 You do not blindly cling to them and die;
 You fell, but have not sullenly refused
 To rise, because an angel worsted you
 In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer,
 And though too harsh and sudden is the change
- 20 To yield content as yet, still you pursue
 The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.
 'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,
 Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.
Paracelsus. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive
 The very pausing from all further toil,
 Which you find heinous, would become a seal
 To the sincerity of all my deeds.
 To be consistent I should die at once;
 I calculated on no after-life;
- 30 Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
 Here am I with as passionate regret
 For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,
 As if their preservation had been first
 And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
 Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
 In rendering me the less averse to follow
 A certain counsel, a mysterious warning —
 You will not understand — but 'twas a man
 With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,
- 40 With the same fervour and no more success
 Perishing in my sight; who summoned me
 As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
 To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
 That God should interfere in my behalf,
- But to distrust myself, put pride away,
 And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
 To men. I have not leisure to explain
 How, since, a singular series of events
 Has raised me to the station you behold,
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account 50
 The mere wreck of the past, — perhaps receive
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views
 And may approve my penance: therefore here
 You find me, doing most good or least harm.
 And if folks wonder much and profit little
 'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
 When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
 And the curtain falls: I must hold out till then.
Festus. Till when, dear Aureole?
Paracelsus. Till I'm fairly thrust
 From my proud eminence. Fortune is 60
 Fickle
 And even professors fall: should that arrive,
 I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
 You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
 We sin; God's intimations rather fail
 In clearness than in energy: 'twere well
 Did they but indicate the course to take
 Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
 Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
 And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.
Festus. Be you but firm on that head! 70
 long ere then
 All I expect will come to pass, I trust:
 The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
 Meantime, I see small chance of such event:
 They praise you here as one whose lore,
 already
 Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
 But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
 Are faint anticipations of a glory
 About to be revealed. When Basil's
 crowds
 Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
 That he depart. 80
Paracelsus. This favour at their hands
 I look for earlier than your view of things
 Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw
 to-day,
 Remove the full half sheer amazement
 draws,
 Mere novelty, nought else; and next, the
 tribe
 Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
 That unless miracles (as seem my works)
 Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is
 slight

- To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous
 Who bitterly hate established schools, and
 The teacher that oppugns them, till he
 Have planted his own doctrine, when the
 May reckon on their rancour in his turn;
 Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious
 Whose cunning runs not counter to the
 But seeks, by flattering and crafty nursing,
 To force my system to a premature
 Short-lived development. Why swell the
 Each has his end to serve, and his best way
 Of serving it: remove all these, remains
 A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
 Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
 And likely to draw profit from my pains.
Festus. 'Tis no encouraging picture:
 still these few
 Redeem their fellows. Once the germ
 implanted,
 Its growth, if slow, is sure.
Paracelsus. God grant it so!
 I would make some amends: but if I fail,
 The luckless rogues have this excuse to
 urge,
 That much is in my method and my man-
 ner,
 My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
 Which hinders of reception and result
 My doctrine: much to say, small skill to
 speak!
 These old aims suffered not a looking-off
 Though for an instant; therefore, only
 when
 I thus renounced them and resolved to
 reap
 Some present fruit — to teach mankind
 some truth
 So dearly purchased — only then I found
 Such teaching was an art requiring cares
 And qualities peculiar to itself:
 That to possess was one thing — to dis-
 play
 Another. With renown first in my
 thoughts,
 On popular praise, I had soon discovered
 it:
 One grows but little apt to learn these
 things.
Festus. If it be so, which nowise I be-
 lieve,
 There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
 To leave a labour of so little use.
 Why not throw up the irksome charge at
 once?
Paracelsus. A task, a task!
 But wherefore hide the whole
 Extent of degradation, once engaged
- In the confessing vein? Despite of all
 My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
 Docility and what not, 'tis yet to learn
 If when the task shall really be performed,
 My inclination free to choose once more,
 I shall do aught but slightly modify
 The nature of the hated task I quit.
 In plain words, I am spoiled; my life still
 tends
 As first it tended; I am broken and trained 50
 To my old habits: they are part of me.
 I know, and none so well, my darling ends
 Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
 Even now what humours me, fond fool,
 as when
 Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter
 me
 And send me back content to my dull
 round?
 How can I change this soul? — this appa-
 ratus
 Constructed solely for their purposes,
 So well adapted to their every want,
 To search out and discover, prove and per- 60
 fect;
 This intricate machine whose most mi-
 nute
 And meanest motions have their charm to
 me
 Though to none else — an aptitude I seize,
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
 A property, a fitness, I explain
 And I alone: — how can I change my soul?
 And this wronged body, worthless save
 when tasked
 Under that soul's dominion — used to care
 For its bright master's cares and quite sub-
 due
 Its proper cravings — not to ail nor pine 70
 So he but prosper — whither drag this
 poor
 Tried patient body? God! how I essayed
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,
 To love alone; and how I felt too warped
 And twisted and deformed! What should
 I do,
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but re-
 turn
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and
 sore,
 To my old life and die as I began?
 I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
 Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm 80
 From lovely objects for their loveliness;
 My nature cannot lose her first imprint:
 I still must hoard and heap and class all
 truths
 With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
 Would God translate me to his throne, be-
 lieve
 That I should only listen to his word
 To further my own aim! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
 And I were happy could I quench as they

This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
 With beauty for itself alone: alas,
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
 I shall o'ertake the company and ride
 Glittering as they!

Festus. I think I apprehend
 10 What you would say: if you, in truth, design

To enter once more on the life thus left,
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
 Of failure is assumed!

Paracelsus. My friend, my friend,
 I toil, you listen; I explain, perhaps
 You understand: there our communion ends.

Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?

When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state

We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft

The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
 20 And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare

My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
 My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
 Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?

That is the crowning operation claimed
 By the arch-demonstrator — heaven the hall,

And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you

Secure good places: 'twill be worth the while.

Festus. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said

To call for this? I judged from your own words.

30 *Paracelsus.* Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape

That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely

You thither turn at once: or he recounts
 The perilous journey he has late performed,
 And you are puzzled much how that could be!

You find me here, half stupid and half mad:

It makes no part of my delight to search
 Into these matters, much less undergo
 Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
 That I am led to trust my state to you:

40 And the event is, you combine, contrast
 And ponder on my foolish words as though
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here —

Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage!

Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?

Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?

Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

Festus. Dear friend . . .

Paracelsus. True: I am brutal — 'tis a part of it;

The plague's sign — you are not a lazarus-haunter,

How should you know? Well then, you think it strange

I should profess to have failed utterly, 50

And yet propose an ultimate return

To courses void of hope: and this, because

You know not what temptation is, nor how

'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.

You are to understand that we who make

Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:

There is not one sharp volley shot at us,

Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we

slacken pace

And gather by the wayside herbs and roots

To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm: 60

We are assailed to life's extremest verge.

It will be well indeed if I return,

A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!

I would forget hints of another fate,

Significant enough, which silent hours

Have lately scared me with.

— *Festus.* Another! and what?

Paracelsus. After all, Festus, you say well: I am

A man yet: I need never humble me.

I would have been — something, I know not what;

But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl. 70

There are worse portions than this one of mine.

You say well!

Festus. Ah!

Paracelsus. And deeper degradation!

If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,

If vanity should become the chosen food

Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish

To find its early aspirations true,

Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath —

An atmosphere of craft and trick and lie;

Should make it proud to emulate, surpass

Base natures in the practices which woke 80

Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!

Utter damnation is reserved for hell!

I had immortal feelings; such shall never

Be wholly quenched: no, no!

My friend, you wear

A melancholy face, and certain 'tis

There's little cheer in all this dismal work.

But was it my desire to set abroad

Such memories and forebodings? I fore-
 saw
 Where they would drive. 'Twere better
 we discuss
 News from Lucerne or Zurich; ask and
 tell
 Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-
 groves.
Festus. I have thought: trust me, this
 mood will pass away!
 I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
 And easily ravel out a clue to all.
 These are the trials meet for such as you,
 Nor must you hope exemption: to be mor-
 tal
 Is to be plied with trials manifold.
 Look round! The obstacles which kept
 the rest
 From your ambition, have been spurned
 by you;
 Their fears, their doubts, the chains that
 bind them all,
 Were flax before your resolute soul, which
 nought
 Avails to awe save these delusions bred
 From its own strength, its selfsame strength
 disguised,
 Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole!
 Since
 The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
 The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their
 cares,
 And higher natures yet would slight and
 laugh
 At these entangling fantasies, as you
 At trammels of a weaker intellect, —
 Measure your mind's height by the shade
 it casts!
 I know you.
Paracelsus. And I know you, dearest
 Festus!
 And how you love unworthily; and how
 All admiration renders blind.
Festus. You hold
 That admiration blinds?
Paracelsus. Ay and alas!
Festus. Nought blinds you less than
 admiration, friend!
 Whether it be that all love renders wise
 In its degree; from love which blends with
 love —
 Heart answering heart — to love which
 spends itself
 In silent mad idolatry of some
 Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of
 souls,
 Which ne'er will know how well it is
 adored.
 I say, such love is never blind; but rather
 Alive to every the minutest spot
 Which mars its object, and which hate
 (supposed
 So vigilant and searching) dreams not
 of.

Love broods on such: what then? When
 first perceived
 Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change, 49
 To overflush those blemishes with all
 The glow of general goodness they disturb?
 — To make those very defects an endless
 source
 Of new affection grown from hopes and
 fears?
 And, when all fails, is there no gallant
 stand
 Made even for much proved weak? no
 shrinking-back
 Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
 To what it loves, it should at length become
 Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,
 If there be fiends who seek to work our 50
 hurt,
 To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest
 spirits
 Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as
 love,
 Their zeal will gather most to serve their
 cause;
 And least from those who hate, who most
 essay
 By contumely and scorn to blot the light
 Which forces entrance even to their hearts:
 For thence will our defender tear the veil
 And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
 The giant image of perfection, grown
 In hate's despite, whose calumnies were 60
 spawned
 In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
 True admiration blinds not; nor am I
 So blind. I call your sin exceptional;
 It springs from one whose life has passed
 the bounds
 Prescribed to life. Compound that fault
 with God!
 I speak of men; to common men like me
 The weakness you reveal endears you more,
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.
 I bid you have good cheer!
Paracelsus. *Præclare! Optime!*
 Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest 70
 Instructing Paracelsus! yet 'tis so.
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds
 That the slow crowd should ground their
 expectation
 Eventually to follow; as the sea
 Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
 Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
 The empire of the whole, some feet per-
 haps,
 Over the strip of sand which could con-
 fine
 Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the 80
 rest,
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be
 glad
 If all my labours, failing of aught else,

Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought: nay, they do
this;

For, whatsoe'er my notions of true know-
ledge

And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others: I precede my
age:

And whoso wills is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his
own

May have a prosperous outset. But, alas!
to My followers — they are noisy as you
heard;

But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-
stones

Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed — if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half
learned.

Festus. I would supply that art, then,
or withhold

to New arms until you teach their mystery.
Paracelsus. Content you, 'tis my wish;
I have recourse

To the simplest training. Day by day I
seek

To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course they are for swaggering forth at
once

Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles'
shield —

Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles!
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding
step!

A proper sight to scare the crows away!
to *Festus.* Pity you choose not then some
other method

Of coming at your point. The marvellous
art

At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-time;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later

to You shall be all-revealed.

Paracelsus. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I
possess

Two sorts of knowledge; one, — vast,
shadowy,

Hints of the unbounded aim I once pur-
sued:

The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize, — perhaps a few

Prime principles which may conduct to
much:

These last I offer to my followers here.
Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured: 50
I must go find them scattered through the
world.

Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound
them

As any other — to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in
print.

For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them
And acting on them: and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well: 60
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the
earth,

For all their novelty and rugged setting.

I think my class will not forget the day

I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,
Were blocks!

Festus. And that reminds me, I heard
something

About your waywardness: you burned
their books,

It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Paracelsus. And who said that? 70

Festus. Some I met yesternight
With Æcolampadius. As you know, the
purpose

Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Paracelsus. Ah, I forgot: you went . . .

Festus. From Zurich with advices for
the ear

Of Luther, now at Wittenberg — (you
know,

I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius) — and returning 80
sought

Basil and . . .

Paracelsus. I remember. Here's a
case now,

Will teach you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention. Pray, does
Luther dream

His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No
indeed!

His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was
under

And heaven above them — points which
chance or time

Affected not — did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly
deny!

There is much breath-stopping, hair-
stiffening
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute
awaiting

The thunderbolt which does not come:
and next,

Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at
work,

— As never will my wise class its instructor.
And you saw Luther?

Festus. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

Paracelsus. True: the so-heavy chain
which galled mankind

Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer — nay, the
worker

Of our own project — we who long before
Had burst our trammels, but forgot the
crowd,

We should have taught, still groaned be-
neath their load:

This he has done and nobly. Speed that
may!

Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
What benefits mankind must glad me too;
And men seem made, though not as I
believed,

For something better than the times pro-
duce.

Witness these gangs of peasants your new
lights

From Suabia have possessed, whom Mün-
zer leads,

And whom the duke, the landgrave and
the elector

Will calm in blood! Well, well; 'tis not
my world!

Festus. Hark!

Paracelsus. 'Tis the melancholy
wind astir

Within the trees; the embers too are grey:
Morn must be near.

Festus. Best ope the casement: see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and
flying stars,

Is blank and motionless: how peaceful
sleep

The tree-tops altogether! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to
bough.

Paracelsus. Ay; you would gaze on a
wind-shaken tree

By the hour, nor count time lost.

Festus. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again.

Paracelsus. Gone, gone,
'Those pleasant times! Does not the moan-
ing wind

Seem to bewail that we have gained such
gains

And bartered sleep for them?

Festus. It is our trust

That there is yet another world to mend

All error and mischance.

Paracelsus. Another world!

And why this world, this common world, to
be

A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come? Man must be
fed

With angels' food, forsooth; and some few
traces

Of a diviner nature which look out

Through his corporeal baseness, warrant
him

In a supreme contempt of all provision

For his inferior tastes — some straggling
marks

Which constitute his essence, just as truly

As here and there a gem would constitute

The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.

But were it so — were man all mind — he
gains

A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,

Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:

Love, hope, fear, faith — these make hu-
manity;

These are its sign and note and character,

And these I have lost! — gone, shut from
me for ever,

Like a dead friend safe from unkindness
more!

See, morn at length. The heavy darkness
seems

Diluted, grey and clear without the stars;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves

as if

Some snake, that weighed them down all
night, let go

His hold; and from the East, fuller and
fuller,

Day, like a mighty river, flowing in;

But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.

Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped
plant,

Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly
leaves

All thick and glistening with diamond dew.

And you depart for Einsiedeln this day,

And we have spent all night in talk like
this!

If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.

Festus. One favour,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply
moved;

Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this
mood

Shall pass away, if light once more arise

Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember — not our love alone —
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on his support, (as I must
think

You trusted) is obscured and dim through
you:

For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear
Aureole?

IV. — PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE. — *Colmar in Alsatia: an Inn.*
1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

*Paracelsus [to JOHANNES OPORINUS,
his Secretary]. Sic itur ad astra!*
Dear Von Visenburg

Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us
dumb.

We live; and shall as surely start to-
morrow

For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me,
good John —

"Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
"Oppose the plague!" Even so? Do
you too share

Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint
through these,
Desist for these! They manage matters
so

At Basil, 'tis like: but others may find
means

To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence — means
to breed

A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill

Which stript a vain pretender of his
plumes:

And, that done, — means to brand each
slavish brow

So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp shall
stay

To show the next they fawn on, what they
are,

This Basil with its magnates, — fill my
cup, —

Whom I curse soul and limb. And now
despatch,

Despatch, my trusty John; and what re-
mains

To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at
least: to-morrow

For Nuremberg! Now leave us; this
grave clerk

Has divers weighty matters for my ear:
[OPORINUS goes out.

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant
Festus,

I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my
heels

As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How
kind,

How very kind, my first best only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace
me!

Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall
live

Till I am worth your love; you shall be
proud,

And I — but let time show! Did you not
wonder?

I sent to you because our compact weighed
Upon my conscience — (you recall the
night

At Basil, which the gods confound!) —
because

Once more I aspire. I call you to my
side:

You come. You thought my message
strange?

Festus. So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.

Paracelsus. He said no more, 6
'Tis probable, than the precious folk I
leave

Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
'Tis true! Poor Paracelsus is exposed

At last; a most egregious quack he proves:
And those he overreached must spit their
hate

On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You
heard

Bare truth; and at my bidding you come
here

To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own 7
friend!

Festus. What is your purpose, Aureole?
Paracelsus. Oh, for purpose,

There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they
sought

To benefit.

Festus. They really cast you off?
 I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your
 claim,
 Knowing his life's worth best; and how the
 judge
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full
 Contempt of him; nor he, again, to
 smother
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a
 flame
 That Basil soon was made no place for you.
Paracelsus. The affair of Liechtenfels?
 the shallowest fable,
 The last and silliest outrage — mere pre-
 tence!
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
 For genuine loyalty — a cheering promise
 Of better things to come — would pall
 and pass;
 And every word comes true. Saul is
 among
 The prophets! Just so long as I was
 pleased
 To play off the mere antics of my art,
 Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
 I got huge praise: but one can ne'er keep
 down
 Our foolish nature's weakness. There
 they flocked,
 Poor devils, jostling, swearing and per-
 spiring,
 Till the walls rang again; and all for me!
 I had a kindness for them, which was
 right;
 But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
 A trust in them and a respect — a sort
 Of sympathy for them; I must needs begin
 To teach them, not amaze them, "to im-
 part
 "Th. spirit which should instigate the
 search
 "O' ruth," just what you bade me! I
 poke out.
 Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
 Flung off — "the sifted chaff of the sack,"
 I said,
 Redoubling my endeavours to secure
 The rest. When lo! one man had tarried
 so long
 Only to ascertain if I supported
 This tenet of his, or that; another loved
 To hear impartially before he judged,
 And having heard, now judged; this bland
 disciple
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
 Spied error where his neighbours marvelled
 most;
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me
 friend,
 Did it because my by-paths, once proved
 wrong

And beacons properly, would commend
 again
 The good old ways our sires jogged safely
 o'er,
 Though not their squeamish sons; the
 other worthy
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,
 Which, read successively, refreshed the
 soul,
 But, muttered backwards, cured the gout,
 the stone,
 The colic and what not. *Quid multa?*
 The end
 Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer 50
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful
 glance
 From those in chief who, cap in hand, in-
 stalled
 The new professor scarce a year before;
 And a vast flourish about patient merit
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendour —
 Of which the example was some luckless
 wight
 Whom my arrival had discomfited,
 But now, it seems, the general voice re-
 called
 To fill my chair and so efface the stain 60
 Basil had long incurred. I sought no
 better,
 Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
 And from my heart I wished them better
 suited
 And better served. Good night to Basil,
 then!
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare
 them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.
Festus. You smile:
 Despise them as they merit!
Paracelsus. If I smile,
 'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
 Flesh into stone. This courteous recom- 70
 pense,
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your
 nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-
 blains,
 The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds — a man, and leaves — a
 hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 — I would lay bare to you the human
 heart
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils
 make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring
 home.
 Oh, sages have discovered we are born 80
 For various ends — to love, to know: has
 ever
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs

Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?

If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!

Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest

Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.

Festus. But your plans, your plans!

I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!

Paracelsus. Whether to sink beneath
such ponderous shame,

15 To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil,
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe, and make that use

Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,

Proud to be patted now and then, and careful

20 To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance

When they shall condescend to tutor me?
Then, one may feel resentment like a flame

Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,

And tangle and entwine mankind with error,

And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood

For a possession, ages: or one may mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse

Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.

30 But I, — now Festus shall divine! — but I

Am merely setting out once more, embracing

My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?

Festus. Your aims? the aims? — to know? and where is found

The early trust . . .

Paracelsus. Nay, not so fast; I say,
The aims — not the old means. You know they made me

A laughing-stock; I was a fool; you know
The when and the how: hardly those means again!

Not but they had their beauty; who should know

Their passing beauty, if not I? Still, dreams

40 They were, or let them vanish, yet in beauty

If that may be. Stay: thus they pass in song! [*He sings.*]

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum,¹ and aloe-balls,

Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls

Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are

fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud

Which breaks to dust when once un-
rolled;

Or shredded perfume, like a clud
From closet long to quiet vowed,

With moth and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,

As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word! And on such pile shall die

My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, for-
gotten,

Or why abjure them? So, I made this rhyme

That fitting dignity might be preserved;
No little proud was I; though the list of

drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Festus. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am

here —
Did you know all! I have travelled far,
indeed,

To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
For in this mood I recognise you less

Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this,

joy;
But rather let me gaze on that despair

Than hear these incoherent words and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling

eye.
Paracelsus. Why, man, I was light-
hearted in my prime,

I am light-hearted now; what would you have?

April was a poet, I make songs —
'Tis the very augury of success I want!

Why should I not be joyous now as then?
Festus. Joyous! and how? and what

remains for joy?
You have declared the ends (which I am

sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Paracelsus. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them — the arch-
fool!

* A fragrant gum.

Listen: my plan will please you not, 'tis
 like,
 But you are little versed in the world's
 ways.
 This is my plan — (first drinking its good
 luck) —
 I will accept all helps; all I despised
 So rashly at the outset, equally
 With early impulses, late years have
 quenched:
 I have tried each way singly: now for both!
 All helps! no one sort shall exclude the
 rest.
 I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
 Not one without the other as before.
 Suppose my labour should seem God's
 own cause
 Once more, as first I dreamed, — it shall
 not baulk me
 Of the meanest earthliest sensualet delight
 That may be snatched; for every joy is
 gain,
 And gain is gain, however small. My soul
 Can die then, nor be taunted — "what
 was gained?"
 Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure
 follow
 As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
 Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt com-
 munion
 With the tumultuous past, the teeming
 future,
 Glorious with visions of a full success.
Festus. Success!
Paracelsus. And wherefore not?
 Why not prefer
 Results obtained in my best state of being
 To those derived alone from seasons dark
 As the thoughts they bred? When I was
 best, my youth
 Unwasted, seemed success not surest too?
 It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
 I am a wanderer: I remember well
 One journey, how I feared the track was
 missed,
 So long the city I desired to reach
 Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
 Flashed through the circling clouds; you
 may conceive
 My transport. Soon the vapours closed
 again,
 But I had seen the city, and one such glance
 No darkness could obscure: nor shall the
 present —
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
 I will fight the battle out; a little spent
 Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
 You look at my grey hair and furrowed
 brow?
 But I can turn even weakness to account:
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
 The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,

Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
 What should I do with age? So, sickness
 lends
 An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all
 We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,
 And natural health is ignorance.
Festus. I see
 But one good symptom in this notable 50
 scheme.
 I feared your sudden journey had in view
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your
 foes.
 'Tis not so: I am glad.
Paracelsus. And if I please
 To spit on them, to trample them, what
 then?
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
 Provoke it. I would spare their self-con-
 ceit,
 But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
 Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
 No quality in the shade, must needs put
 forth
 Power to match power, my strength against 60
 their strength,
 And teach them their own game with their
 own arms —
 Why, be it so and let them take their
 chance!
 I am above them like a god, there's no
 Hiding the fact: what idle scruples, then,
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,
 Communicate it gently to the world,
 Instead of proving my supremacy,
 Taking my natural station o'er their head,
 Then owning all the glory was a man's!
 — And in my elevation man's would be. 70
 But live and learn, though life's short,
 learning, hard!
 And therefore, though the wreck of my
 past self,
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
 The penitent empiric, who set up
 For somebody, but soon was taught his
 place;
 Now, but too happy to be let confess
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)
 Your medicine's soundness in his person. 80
 Wait,
 Good Pütter!
Festus. He who sneers thus, is a god!
Paracelsus. Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am
 very glad
 You are not gulled by all this swaggering;
 you
 Can see the root of the matter! — how I
 strive
 To put a good face on the overthrow
 I have experienced, and to bury and hide
 My degradation in its length and breadth;
 How the mean motives I would make you
 think

Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me as being mortal still —
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires. You are no stupid
dupe:

You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you,
Festus!

Laugh — you shall laugh at me!

Festus. The past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing? Is our interchange of
love

10 Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation;
These low thoughts are no inmates of your
mind,

Or, wherefore this disorder? You are
vexed

As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls; not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
20 From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales — while foresters
Sleep calm, though all night long the fam-
ished troop
Snuff round and scratch against their
crazy huts.

These evil thoughts are monsters, and will
flee.

Paracelsus. May you be happy, Festus,
my own friend!

Festus. Nay, further; the delights you
fain would think

The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you. . . .

Paracelsus. Hush! I once despised
them,

30 But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we re-
fuse:

In short, when some such comfort is doled
out

As these delights, we cannot long retain
Bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly
earned:

40 I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through
joy;

Nor can I know, but straight warm tears
reveal

My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,

Confusedly; this will better explain —
feel here!

Quick beating, is it not? — a fire of the
heart

To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his 50
calm

Compassionate look might have disturbed
me once,

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity:
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me — satiating myself

With his enduring love. And Festus quits
me

To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits: I suck in 60
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool; for night is
come,

And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its
prison; my frame

Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out,
my hair

Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the
morn

Shall break on my pent room and dwin-
dling lamp

And furnace dead, and scattered earths
and ores;

When, with a failing heart and throbbing 70
brow,

I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bear-
ings,

Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme,
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded
it,

Proved worthless — which, in getting, yet
had cost

Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases 80
sorrow!

I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his
own.

See! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .
Why do you start? I say, she listening
here,

(For yonder — Würzburg through the
orchard-bough!)

Motions as though such ardent words 90
should find

No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill
fast

-With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the
while!

Ha, ha!

Festus. It seems, then, you expect to
reap

No unreal joy from this your present
course,

But rather . . .

Paracelsus. Death! To die! I owe
that much

To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall,

To thrive and fatten after such reverse!

10 The whole plan is a makeshift, but will
last

My time.

Festus. And you have never mused and
said,

"I had a noble purpose, and the strength
To compass it; but I have stopped half-

way,

"And wrongly given the first-fruits of my
toil

"To objects little worthy of the gift.

"Why linger round them still? why
clench my fault?

"Why seek for consolation in defeat,

"In vain endeavours to derive a beauty

"From ugliness? why seek to make the
most

20 "Of what no power can change, nor strive
instead

"With mighty effort to redeem the past

"And, gathering up the treasures thus cast
down,

"To hold a steadfast course till I arrive

"At their fit destination and my own?"

You have never pondered thus?

Paracelsus. Have I, you ask,
Often at midnight, when most fancies
come,

Would some such airy project visit me:

But ever at the end . . . or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable?

30 You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.

Just as we cry, "No human voice before

"Broke the inveterate silence of these
rocks!"

— Their querulous echo startles us; we
turn:

What ravaged structure still looks o'er the
sea?

Some characters remain, too! While we
read,

The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and

goes,

Or sings what we recover, mocking it.

40 This is the record; and my voice, the
wind's. [*He sings.*]

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding
wave,

A gallant armament:

Each bark built out of a forest-tree

Left leafy and rough as first it grew,

And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-

hides,

Seethed in fat and suppld in flame,

To bear the playful billows' game: 50

So, each good ship was rude to see;

Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent

Where cedar pales in scented row

Kept out the flakes of the dancing
brine,

And an awning drooped the mast
below,

In fold on fold of the purple fine,

That neither noontide nor starshine

Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad, 60

Might pierce the regal tenement.

When the sun dawned, oh, gay, and
glad

We set the sail and plied the oar;

But when the night-wind blew like
breath,

For joy of one day's voyage more,

We sang together on the wide sea,

Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;

Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,

Each helm made sure by the twilight star,

And in a sleep as calm as death,

We, the voyagers from afar, 70

Lay stretched along, each weary crew

In a circle round its wondrous tent

Whence gleamed soft light and curled
rich scent,

And with light and perfume, music too:

So the stars wheeled round, and the
darkness past,

And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared — a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:

"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check 80

"The shout, restrain the eager eye!"

But the heaving sea was black behind

For many a night and many a day,

And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;

So, we broke the cedar pales away,

Let the purple awning flap in the wind,

And a statue bright was on every deck!

We shouted, every man of us,

And steered right into the harbour thus,

With pomp and pæan glorious. 90

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!

All day we built its shrine for each,

A shrine of rock for every one,

Nor paused till in the westering sun

We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!

"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
"Our temple-gates are opened wide,
10 "Our olive-groves thick shade are
keeping

"For these majestic forms"—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too
late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—"Depart!

"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
"Our work is done; we have no heart
"To mar our work,"—we cried.

10 *Festus*. In truth?

Paracelsus. Nay, wait: all this
in tracings faint

On rugged stones strewn here and there,
but piled

In order once: then follows—mark what
follows!

"The sad rhyme of the men who proudly
clung

"To their first fault, and withered in their
pride."

Festus. Come back then, Aureole; as
you fear God, come!

This is foul sin; come back! Renounce
the past,

Forswear the future; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy
sights,

And trust me for the event—peace, if not
joy.

30 Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear
Aureole!

Paracelsus. No way, no way! it would
not turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering
moss—

'Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew
well

(Spite of the grave discoveries of their
sons)

The fitting course for such: dark cells,
dim lamps,

A stone floor one may writhe on like a
worm:

40 No mossy pillow blue with violets!

Festus. I see no symptom of these
absolute

And tyrannous passions. You are calmer
now.

This verse-making can purge you well
enough

Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear will
never

Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once
more!

Say but the word!

Paracelsus. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-
shut eye

Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust
yourself

Between them and their prey; let some 50
fool style me

Or king or quack, it matters not—then
try

Your wisdom, urge them to forego their
treat!

No, no; learn better and look deeper,
Festus!

If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now
that,

As though we differed scarcely save in
trifles!

Festus. Do we so differ? True, change
must proceed,

Whether for good or ill; keep from me,
which!

Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you . . .

Paracelsus. To trust: you know the 60
fruits!

Festus. Listen: I do believe, what you
call trust

Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer

A path for you, and screen you from the
world,

Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the

mere pretext

Of your engagement in his service—
yield you

A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to

say

Most courtly praises! What is it, at last, 70
But selfishness without example? None

Could trace God's will so plain as you,
while yours

Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are

fools!

In short, God's service is established here
As he determines fit, and not your way,

And this you cannot brook. Such discon-
tent

Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at
once!

Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should 80
say—

- 'We rush to the ocean; what have we to do
 "With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
 "Sleeping in lazy pools?" Set up that plea,
 That will be bold at least!
Paracelsus. 'Tis like enough.
 The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
 The East produces: lo, the master bids, —
 They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds
 In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin
 Another century's sleep, to the great praise
 Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
 Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
 Wake them again. I am of different mould.
 I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him
 And done him service past my narrow bond
 And thus I get rewarded for my pains!
 Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
 God's glory otherwise; this is alone
 The sphere of its increase, as far as men
 Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere?
 We are his glory; and if we be glorious,
 Is not the thing achieved?
Festus. Shall one like me
 Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed you much,
 And you have left your first love, and retain
 Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
 Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
 And who shall call your course without reward?
 For, wherefore this repining at defeat
 Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?
 I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
 And what success attends me? — simply talk
 Of passion, weakness and remorse; in short,
 Anything but the naked truth — you choose
 This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
 My happiness, or rather other men's.
 Once more, return!
Paracelsus. And quickly. John the thief
 Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
 And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
 I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
 My brain to-night . . .
 Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
 No flattery! One like you needs not be told
- We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
 Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
 Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
 My rhymes and all this frothy showers of words,
 My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
 Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
 Wrapt the sound flesh? — so, see you flatter not!
 Even God flatters: but my friend, at least, is true. I would depart, secure henceforth 54
 Against all further insult, hate and wrong
 From puny foes; my one friend's scorn shall brand me:
 No fear of sinking deeper!
Festus. No, dear Aureole!
 No, no; I came to counsel faithfully.
 There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
 By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
 So infinitely low beside your mighty
 Majestic spirit! — even I can see
 You own some higher law than ours which call
 Sin, what is no sin — weakness, what is 60
 strength.
 But I have only these, such as they are,
 To guide me; and I blame you where they bid,
 Only so long as blaming promises
 To win peace for your soul: the more, that sorrow
 Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
 So that I faint not under my distress.
 But wherefore should I scruple to avow
 In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
 Your fate is most inexplicable to me?
 And should you perish without recompense 70
 And satisfaction yet — too hastily
 I have relied on love: you may have sinned,
 But you have loved. As a mere human matter —
 As I would have God deal with fragile men
 In the end — I say that you will triumph yet!
Paracelsus. Have you felt sorrow, Festus? — 'tis because
 You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!
 Well thought on: never let her know this last
 Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared
 Insult me — me she loved: — so, grieve 80
 her not!
Festus. Your ill success can little grieve her now.
Paracelsus. Michal is dead! pray
 Christ we do not craze!

Festus. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!

Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof —

I cannot bear those eyes.

Paracelsus. Nay, really dead?

Festus. 'Tis scarce a month.

Paracelsus. Stone dead! — then you have laid her

Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,

I can reveal a secret which shall comfort Even you. I have no julep, as men think, To cheat the grave; but a far better secret. Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love

10 To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:

For I believe we do not wholly die.

Festus. Aureole!

Paracelsus. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason

For what I say: I think the soul can never Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,

Very unfit to put so strange a thought

In an intelligible dress of words;

But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Festus. But not on this account alone? you surely,

— Aureole, you have believed this all along?

20 *Paracelsus.* And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,

While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes

For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,

As though it mattered how the farce plays out,

So it be quickly played. Away, away!

Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,

Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats And leave a clear arena for the brave

30 About to perish for your sport! — Behold!

V. — PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE. — *Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Festus. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,

30 The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars

Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!

Another night, and still no sigh has stirred That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit

Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,

Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside

Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,

As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;

But they are dead now — very blind and dead:

He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole — my forgotten, ruined Aureole!

The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!

And now not one of those who struck thee down —

Poor glorious spirit — concerns him even to stay

And satisfy himself his little hand Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change! 'Tis much

That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,

And chafe his hands; 'tis much: but he will sure

Know me, and look on me, and speak to me

Once more — but only once! His hollow 50 cheek

Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh

At his own state were just about to break From the dying man: my brain swam, my

throat swelled,

And yet I could not turn away. In truth, They told me how, when first brought

here, he seemed Resolved to live, to lose no faculty;

Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,

Until they bore him to this stifling cell: When straight his features fell, an hour

made white The flushed face, and relaxed the quiver- 60 ing limb,

Only the eye remained intense awhile As though it recognised the tomb-like

place, And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded — Her bravest champion with his well-won

prize — Her best achievement, her sublime amends

For countless generations fleeting fast And followed by no trace; — the creature-

god She instances when angels would dispute

The title of her brood to rank with 70 them.

Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human, but not his; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.
10 Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought thy praise — thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side —
20 How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred, —
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou are not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou
30 Forgivest — so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away!
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
But what art thou? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he — thou shouldst have favoured him as well!
Ah! he wakens! Aureole, I am here! 'tis Festus!

I cast away all wishes save one wish —
Let him but know me, only speak to me! 46
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!
Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?
Misery that he should fix me with his eye,
Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates its intent! — I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert 50
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past! — His eye
Brighter than ever! It must recognise me!

I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once 60
more!
(O Agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.
Better be mute and see what God shall send.
Paracelsus. Stay, stay with me!
Festus. I will; I am come here
To stay with you — Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!
Paracelsus. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could
not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast, 70
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough! If they have filled him
full
With magical music, as they freight a
star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!
Festus. Festus, your Festus!
Paracelsus. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves — if I shall Love and
Know?
I try; but that cold hand, like lead — so
cold!
Festus. My hand, see!
Paracelsus. Ah, the curse, Aprile,
Aprile!
We get so near — so very, very near!
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans 80
down,

- Not when they set about their mountain-
piling
But when another rock would crown the
work.
And Phaeton — doubtless his first radiant
plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were
calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old
tales!
Festus. And what are these to you?
Paracelsus. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well! most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were
chuckling
- 10 To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that
thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One
year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your
turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile.
But now,
Who will believe 'twas you that held me
back?
Listen: there's shame and hissing and
contempt,
And none but laughs who names me, none
but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar, — all on
me!
- 20 And thus your famous plan to sink man-
kind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost
truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no
less —
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men
despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who
rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of them-
selves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
- 30 So, pick and choose among them all, ac-
cursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for
you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.
Festus. Dear friend, who are accursed?
who has done . . .
Paracelsus. What have I done? Fiends
dare ask that? or you,
Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly,
backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage
peers?
- Here stand my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I
ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with
theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to dis-
allow.
Only observe! why, fiends may learn from
them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my
fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one
claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they
dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the
while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! 50
Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate? My
truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each
prince?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be
crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch
in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned
respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell — nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face
to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee. 60
Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my
pledge?
Festus. Peace, peace; ah, see!
Paracelsus. Oh, emptiness of fame!
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
— Who said these old renowns, dead long
ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they
stood, indeed,
But stand no longer? What a warm light
life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate
witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide 70
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like
yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the
smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh
white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly
dancing!

I cared not for your passionate gestures
 then,
 But now I have forgotten the charm of
 charms,
 The foolish knowledge which I came to
 seek,
 While I remember that quaint dance; and
 thus
 I am come back, not for those mummeries,
 But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
 Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

Festus. A light
 Will struggle through these thronging
 words at last.

As in the angry and tumultuous West
 A soft star trembles through the drifting
 clouds.

These are the strivings of a spirit which
 hates

So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
 The past to stand between it and its fate.
 Were he at Einsiedeln — or Michal here!

Paracelsus. Cruel! I seek her now —
 I kneel — I shriek —

I clasp her vesture — but she fades, still
 fades;

And she is gone; sweet human love is
 gone!

'Tis only when they spring to heaven that
 angels

Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
 Beside you, and lie down at night by you
 Who care not for their presence, muse or
 sleep,

And all at once they leave you, and you
 know them!

We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even
 now

I am not too secure against foul play;
 The shadows deepen and the walls con-
 tract:

No doubt some treachery is going on.
 'Tis very dusk. Where are we put,
 Aprile?

Have they left us in the lurch! This
 murky loathsome

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not the
 hall

In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
 There is a hand groping amid the black-
 ness

To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got
 you,

Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once
 They pull you! — Hold!

'Tis but a dream — no more!
 I have you still; the sun comes out again;

Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
 Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,

That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
 The value of my labours ascertained,

Just as some stream foams long among the
 rocks

But after glideth glassy to the sea,

So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?
 What think you, poet? Louder! Your
 clear voice

Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you
 ask

How could I still remain on earth, should
 God

Grant me the great approval which I seek?
 I, you, and God can comprehend each
 other,

But men would murmur, and with cause
 enough;

For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,
 Preserved and sanctified by inward light, 50
 They would complain that comfort, shut
 from them,

I drank thus unspied; that they live on,
 Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
 For ache and care and doubt and weariness,
 While I am calm; help being vouchsafed
 to me,

And hid from them. — 'Twere best con-
 sider that!

You reason well, Aprile; but at least
 Let me know this, and die! Is this too
 much?

I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt 60
 please!

We are so weak, we know our motives
 least

In their confused beginning. It at first
 I sought . . . but wherefore bare my
 heart to thee?

I know thy mercy; and already thoughts
 Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
 And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
 For love and praise would clasp me
 willingly

Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art
 good,

And I should be content. Yet — yet first
 show

I have done wrong in daring! Rather give 70
 The supernatural consciousness of strength
 Which fed my youth! Only one hour of
 that

With thee to help — O what should bar
 me then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! 80
 God's creatures,

And yet he takes no pride in us! — none,
 none!

Truly there needs another life to come!
 If this be all — (I must tell Festus that)

And other life await us not — for one,
 I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,

A wretched failure. I, for one, protest 85
 Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone! Small time
 remains,

- And much to do: I must have fruit, must
reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my
body
Will hardly serve me through; while I
have laboured
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling
smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
10 The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!
Thus fades the flagging body, and the
soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well,
well —
Let men catch every word, let them lose
nought
Of what I say; something may yet be done.
- They are ruins! Trust me who am one of
you!
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you
crouch
Beside your desolate fane: the arches dim,
20 The crumbling columns grand against the
moon,
Could I but rear them up once more —
but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust me,
friends,
Why should you linger here when I have
built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not pre-
pared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their
dwelling is:
I would sit down in silence with the rest.
- 30 Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and
shriek
Contempt into my ear — my ear which
drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why
men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous
eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, pray-
ing,
They will not let me even die. Spare,
spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn! You thought I could
support it.
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad
enough,
- Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was 40
saved
From Hate like this. Let me but totter
back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which
creep
Into my very brain, and shut these
scorched
Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.
- Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned
thing:
I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I 50
Who broke through their best ranks to get
at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!
Festus. Have you no thought, no mem-
ory for me,
Aureole? I am so wretched — my pure
Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my
hand —
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me,
Aureole?
Paracelsus. Festus, my own friend, you
are come at last?
As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it: 60
'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank
him for me,
Dear Michal! See how bright St.
Saviour's spire
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might con-
ceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemp-
tion dawns.
Festus. Not that blest time — not our
youth's time, dear God!
Paracelsus. Ha — stay! true, I forget
— all is done since,
And he is come to judge me. How he
speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all 70
true;
All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught me
tricks
So foreign to my nature — envy and hate,
Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance — what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most ap-
proved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as
you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require
me,

Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
 Explain its bounded nature, and avow
 My insufficiency — whate'er you will:
 I give the fight up: let there be an end,
 A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
 I want to be forgotten even by God.
 But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
 When I shall die, within some narrow
 grave,
 Not by itself — for that would be too
 proud —
 But where such graves are thickest; let it
 look
 Nowise distinguished from the hillocks
 round,
 So that the peasant at his brother's bed
 May tread upon my own and know it not;
 And we shall all be equal at the last,
 Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
 Fathers, sons, brothers, friends — not
 rich, nor wise,
 Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say, "He
 lived
 "Too much advanced before his brother
 men;
 "They kept him still in front: 'twas for
 their good
 20 "But yet a dangerous station. It were
 strange
 "That he should tell God he had never
 ranked
 "With men: so, here at least he is a man."
Festus. That God shall take thee to his
 breast, dear spirit,
 Unto his breast, be sure! and here on
 earth
 30 Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever.
 Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what
 care
 If lower mountains light their snowy phares
 At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
 The source of day? Their theft shall be
 their bale:
 30 For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
 And put aside the crowd of busy ones
 And worship thee alone — the master
 mind,
 The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
 Then, who should sneer at the convulsive
 throes
 With which thy deeds were born, would
 scorn as well
 The sheet of winding subterranean fire
 Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at
 last
 Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
 Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused
 40 Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
 Seeing I comprehend thee — I so simple,
 Thou so august. I recognise thee first;
 I saw thee rise. I watched thee early and
 late,
 And though no glance reveal thou dost
 accept!

My homage — thus no less I proffer it,
 And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.
Paracelsus. Festus!
Festus. I am for noble Aureole, God!
 I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
 His portion shall be mine. He has done
 well.
 I would have sinned, had I been strong 50
 enough,
 As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
 Reward! If thou canst find no place for
 him,
 He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
 His slave for ever. There are two of us.
Paracelsus. Dear Festus!
Festus. Here, dear Aureole! ever
 by you!
Paracelsus. Nay, speak on, or I dream
 again. Speak on!
 Some story, anything — only your voice.
 I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning
 so!
Festus. Thus the Mayne glideth
 Where my Love abideth. 60
 Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
 On through lawns, on through meads,
 On and on, whate'er befall,
 Meandering and musical,
 Though the niggard pasturage
 Bears not on its shaven ledge
 Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes,
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses too faint to catch 70
 A weary bee.
Paracelsus. More, more; say on!
Festus. And scarce it pushes
 Its gentle way through strangling
 rushes
 Where the glossy kingfisher
 Flutters when noon-heats are near,
 Glad the shelving banks to shun,
 Red and steaming in the sun,
 Where the shrew-mouse with pale
 throat
 Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
 Where the quick sandpipers flit 80
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as
 they:
 Nought disturbs its quiet way,
 Save some lazy stork that springs,
 Trailing it with legs and wings,
 Whom the shy fox from the hill
 Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.
Paracelsus. My heart! they loose my
 heart, those simple words;
 Its darkness passes, which nought else
 could touch:
 Like some dark snake that force may not 90
 expel,
 Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
 What were you doing when your voice
 broke through

A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here?

Festus. All alone: you know me?

This cell?

Paracelsus. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept out,
the rats

Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mis-
take it?

Festus. But wherefore am I here?

Paracelsus. Ah, well remembered!
Why, for a purpose—for a purpose,
Festus!

'Tis like me: here I trifle while time fleets,
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.

10 You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message; but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave half out. All is confused
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in
time.

He would not else have brought you here:
no doubt

I shall see clearer soon.

Festus. Tell me but this—

You are not in despair?

Paracelsus. I? and for what?

Festus. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I
feared!

Paracelsus. What is it you would ask
me with that earnest

Dear searching face?

Festus. How feel you, Aureole?

Paracelsus. Well:

20 Well. 'Tis a strange thing: I am dying,
Festus,

And now that fast the storm of life sub-
sides,

I first perceive how great the whirl has
been.

I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no
less

A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the
brightening weather;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below?

The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'er-
strewn

30 With ravaged boughs and remnants of the
shore;

And now some islet, loosened from the
land,

Swims past with all its trees, sailing to
ocean;

And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tama-
risks

Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to
them,

All high in the wind. Even so my varied
life

Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,

And all at once: that is, those past condi-
tions

Float back at once on me. If I select 44
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve
away,

And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions
must

Be born in me before I plunge therein; 50
Which last is Death's affair; and while I
speak,

Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the
threshold

Of boundless life—the doors unopened
yet,

All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, *Festus!* You will die like
me.

Festus. 'Tis of that past life that I burn 60
to hear.

Paracelsus. You wonder it engages me
just now?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last
view.

I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them
over,

To feel how fully they are past and gone. 70
Still, it is like, some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden pur-
pose;

Did I not tell you something of it, *Festus?*
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me; it will return anon.

Festus. (Indeed his cheek seems young
again, his voice

Complete with its old tones: that little
laugh

Concluding every phrase, with upturned
eye,

As though one stooped above his head to
whom

He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well pre- 80
served?

Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him.
But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,
 Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
 That worldly things are utter vanity?
 That man is made for weakness, and should wait
 In patient ignorance, till God appoint . . .
Paracelsus. Ha, the purpose: the true purpose: that is it!
 How could I fail to apprehend! You here, I thus! But no more trifling: I see all, I know all: my last mission shall be done
 10 If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay: this, posture
 Hardly befits one thus about to speak: I will arise.
Festus. Nay, Aureole, are you wild? You cannot leave your couch.
Paracelsus. No help; no help; Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
 Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.
 My gown — the scarlet lined with fur; now put
 The chain about my neck; my signet-ring Is still upon my hand, I think — even so; Last, my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
 20 Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
 This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
 Be consecrate, this wretched cell become A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
 Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.
Festus. I am dumb with wonder.
Paracelsus. Listen, therefore, Festus! There will be time enough, but none to spare.
 I must content myself with telling only The most important points. You doubtless feel
 That I am happy, Festus; very happy.
 30 *Festus.* 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus!
 Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?
Paracelsus. Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned?
Festus. 'Tis God's praise
 That man is bound to seek, and you . . .
Paracelsus. Have lived!
 We have to live alone to set forth well God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
 And in effect need mercy, for I strove To do that very thing; but, do your best Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
 Pardon from him, because of praise denied —
 40 Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?

He might laugh as I laugh!
Festus. But all comes To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
 To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
 They are no use that way: they should lie down
 Content as God has made them, nor go mad
 In thriveless cares to better what is ill
Paracelsus. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
 More harm than I have worked! This is my case:
 If I go joyous back to God, yet bring No offering, if I render up my soul
 50 Without the fruits it was ordained to bear, If I appear the better to love God
 For sin, as one who has no claim on him, — Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
 With me, while higher prizes still await The mortal persevering to the end.
 Beside I am not all so valueless: I have been something, though too soon I left
 Following the instincts of that happy time.
Festus. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's sake,
 60 What time was happy? All I hope to know
 That answer will decide. What happy time?
 * *Paracelsus.* When but the time I vowed myself to man?
Festus. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!
 * *Paracelsus.* Yes, it was in me; I was born for it —
 I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right. Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
 Might learn from its own motions that some task
 Like this awaited it about the world;
 70 Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
 For fit delights to stay its longings vast; And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
 To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
 Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous
 Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
 And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
 Of other joy to follow — bating nought
 Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
 To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrong
 80 As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
 Into occasion for new covetings,
 New strifes, new triumphs: — doubtless a strong soul,

Alone, unaided might attain to this,
 So glorious is our nature, so august
 Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
 His naked spirit so majestic!
 But this was born in me; I was made so;
 Thus much time saved: the feverish appe-
 tites,
 The tumult of unproved desire, the un-
 aimed
 Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
 Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in
 tears
 10 Were saved me; thus I entered on my
 course.
 You may be sure I was not all exempt
 From human trouble; just so much of
 doubt
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
 The fierce and flashing splendour, set my
 heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I stood
 there
 On sufferance — not to idly gaze, but cast
 Light on a darkling race; save for that
 doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 10 To stand: the secret of the world was mine.
 I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every
 shift
 And change in the spirit, — nay, in every
 pore
 Of the body, even,) — what God is, what
 we are,
 What life is — how God tastes an infinite
 joy
 In infinite ways — one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all power
 Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
 30 Yet whom existence in its lowest form
 Includes; where dwells enjoyment there
 is he:
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
 The centre-fire heaves underneath the
 earth,
 And the earth changes like a human face;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches
 bright
 40 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams
 bask —
 God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves
 are edged
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
 When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on
 flame —

God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth
 pride.
 Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress,
 passes
 Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure 50
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of
 frost,
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are
 swoln with blooms
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
 The shining dorræ are busy, beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ad;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
 Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls 60
 Flit where the strand is purple with its
 tribe
 Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
 Their loves in wood and plain — and God
 renews
 His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in
 all,
 From life's minute beginnings, up at last
 To man — the consummation of this
 scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life: whose attributes had here and
 there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
 Asking to be combined, dim fragments 70
 meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole,
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
 Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
 Some point where all those scattered rays
 should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power — neither put forth blindly, nor
 controlled
 Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and
 fear:
 Knowledge — not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil, 80
 Strengthened by love: love — not serenely
 pure,
 But strong from weakness, like a chance-
 sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth
 changed buds
 And softer stains, unknown in happier
 climes;
 Love which endures and doubts and is
 oppressed
 And cherished, suffering much and much
 sustained,
 And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-chequered
 trust: —
 Hints and previsions of which faculties,
 Are strewn confusedly everywhere about 90

The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,

All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the
grand result

A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth; man, once desried, imprints
for ever

His presence on all lifeless things: the
winds

Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.
The herded pines commune and have deep
thoughts,

A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks
which glare

Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no
bird

Whistles unseen, but through the gaps
above

That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and
mocking eye.

The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset
hour,

Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
— And this to fill us with regard for
man.

With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress
is

The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly
forth,

While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering
mind

O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the
host

Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers — then, not
till then,

I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish
starts

Of restless members of a dormant whole,

Impatient nerves which quiver while the
body

Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids so
astir,

The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-
uttered speech

Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-
hand clenched stronger,

As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in
sleep!

But when full roused, each giant-limb
awake,

Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing
fast,

He shall start up and stand on his own
earth,

Then shall his long triumphant march
begin,

Thence shall his being date, — thus wholly so
roused,

What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike

As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus
far:

But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self
arise

August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.

For men begin to pass their nature's
bound,

And find new hopes and cares which fast
supplant

Their proper joys and griefs; they grow
too great

For narrow creeds of right and wrong,
which fade

Before the unmeasured thirst for good:
while peace

Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,

Serene amid the half-formed creatures
round

Who should be saved by them and joined
with them.

Such was my task, and I was born to it — so
Free, as I said but now, from much that
chains

Spirits, high-dowered but limited and
vexed

By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality

Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The fitting mimic called up by itself,

And so remains perplexed and nigh put
out

By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus:

- I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto
With powers put forth at man's expense,
withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
10 Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power; I could not take my eyes from
that:
That only, I thought, should be preserved,
increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once —
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past: only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
20 Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to
tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within its
spring:
I would have had one day, one moment's
space,
Change man's condition, push each slum-
bering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
30 What night had ushered morn. Not so,
dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper
tenure
By which thou hast the earth: for thee the
present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty,
seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in
relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on
thee
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to
heaven:
40 But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep
thee man!
All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims cir-
cumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and
that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
- The primal aggregate, seemed, even the
least,
Itself a match for my concentrated
strength —
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
50 Despair? The power I sought for man,
seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one
sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile — my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch dis-
burthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my
ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's un-
doing
Taught me the worth of love in man's
estate,
And what proportion love should hold with
60 power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always
much more love;
Love still too straitened in his present means
And earnest for new power to set love free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole was
learned:
And thus, when men received with stupid
wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped
me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered
praise —
When, with awakened eyes, they took re-
venge
70 For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them —
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere: and
why?
In my own heart love had not been made
wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in man-
kind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathise, be proud
80 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and
doubts;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though
weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the
sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may
be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men

Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
 Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a
 third
 And better-tempered spirit, warned by
 both:
 As from the over-radiant star too mad
 To drink the life-springs, beamless thence
 itself —
 And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
 Ingulfed in icy night, — might have its
 course
 A temperate and equidistant world.
 Meanwhile, I have done well, though not
 all well.
 As yet men cannot do without contempt;
 'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
 That they reject the weak, and scorn the
 false,
 Rather than praise the strong and true, in
 me:
 But after, they will know me. If I stoop
 Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
 It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
 Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or
 late,
 Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one
 day.
 You understand me? I have said enough?
Festus. Now die, dear Aureole!
Paracelsus. Festus, let my hand —
 This hand, lie in your own, my own true
 friend!
 Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Festus. And this was Paracelsus!

NOTE.

THE liberties I have taken with my sub-
 ject are very trifling; and the reader may
 slip the foregoing scenes between the
 leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he
 pleases, by way of commentary. To
 prove this, I subjoin a popular account,
 translated from the "Biographie Uni-
 verselle, Paris," 1822, which I select, not
 as the best, certainly, but as being at
 hand, and sufficiently concise for my pur-
 pose. I also append a few notes, in order
 to correct those parts which do not bear
 out my own view of the character of Para-
 celsus; and have incorporated with them
 a notice or two, illustrative of the poem
 itself.

"PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus
 Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohen-
 heim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln,⁽¹⁾
 a little town in the canton of Schwyz,
 some leagues distant from Zurich. His
 father, who exercised the profession of
 medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was

nearly related to George Bombast de
 Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand
 Prior of the Order of Malta: consequently
 Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs
 of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his
 sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that
 his elementary education was much neg-
 lected, and that he spent part of his
 youth in pursuing the life common to the
 travelling *litterati* of the age; that is to say,
 in wandering from country to country,
 predicting the future by astrology and
 cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and
 practising the different operations of
 magic and alchemy, in which he had
 been initiated whether by his father or
 by various ecclesiastics, among the num-
 ber of whom he particularises the Abbot
 Tritheim,⁽²⁾ and many German bishops.

"As Paracelsus displays everywhere
 an ignorance of the rudiments of the most
 ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that
 he ever studied seriously in the schools:
 he contented himself with visiting the
 Universities of Germany, France, and
 Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself
 to have been the ornament of those insti-
 tutions, there is no proof of his having
 legally acquired the title of Doctor, which
 he assumes. It is only known that he
 applied himself long, under the direction
 of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger of
 Schwatz, to the discovery of the Magnum
 Opus.

"Paracelsus travelled among the moun-
 tains of Bohemia, in the East, and in
 Sweden, in order to inspect the labours
 of the miners, to be initiated in the mys-
 teries of the oriental adepts, and to observe
 the secrets of nature and the famous moun-
 tain of loadstone.⁽³⁾ He professes also to
 have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia,
 Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere
 communicating freely, not merely with
 the physicians, but the old women, char-
 latans and conjurers of these several lands.
 It is even believed that he extended his
 journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary,
 and that he accompanied the son of the
 Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople,

*I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sen-
 tence a little. "Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum
 trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum fe-
 runt: constat imberbem illum, mulierumque
 osorem fuisse." A standing High-Dutch joke
 in those days at the expense of a number of learned
 men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish
 as Melander's "Jocoseria," etc. In the prints
 from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year
 before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus*, at all
 events. But Erastus was never without a good
 reason for his faith — e.g. "Helvetium fuisse
 (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale
 monstrum ediderit." (De Medicina Nova.)

for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

"The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Ecolampadius,⁽⁴⁾ to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. 'You shall follow me,' cried he, 'you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,* and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew: all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.†

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only

* Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, "mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit." Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary "had heard somewhere," — that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging "Anglum quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem."

† See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen: — Somebody had been styling him "Luther alter." "And why not?" (he asks, as he well might). "Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you. — Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academie. Prodit, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem." (Frag. Med.)

dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water.⁽⁵⁾

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,⁽⁶⁾ he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.‡ Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his 'Chronicle' to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541." — (Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; Einsiedeln is the Latinised Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita; Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbipolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as

‡ "So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts."

may be seen by his "Epistolæ Familiares," Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud Herbipolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus," etc.

(3) "Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed Mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret." (Bitiskius in Præfat.) "Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem." (Melch. Adam. in Vit. Germ. Medic.) "Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfectaque videtur." (Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea.) His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: "Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris hæud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?" etc. ("Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos." 1573. Def. 4ta. "De peregrinationibus et exilio.")

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Ecolampadius, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melanchthon at Marburg. Their letters

fill a large volume. — "D. D. Johannis Ecolampadii et Huldrici Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor." Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of Ecolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy: — "About this time arose out of Luther's school one Ecolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years." (Life of Bishop Fisher, 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso ("Elogj d'Huomini Letterati," Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quenstedt (de Patr. Doct.) affirms "nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est." Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.* classes him among those "partim atheos, partim hæreticos" (lib. i. cap. 3). "Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani." (D. Gabrielis Claudi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb. 1736.) I shall only add one more authority: — "Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hære." (Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova.) These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his "Theatrum," "longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob præceptoris, aliqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret."

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses:

"Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ coævum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum. (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columinam τετυφωμένους assistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus κοίλωμα hospitium præbuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit: — alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant." (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

'Volpone,' act ii. scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks
Of past and future mountebanks.

'Hudibras,' part ii. cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum*." But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture — the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others: — "Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ prociſus a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediſſimorum suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinæque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testi-

monium." (Bitiskius.)* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: "Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi poenitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quæ spiranti infixierant." For these "bites" of Oporinus, see Disputat. Erasti, and Andrea Jocisci "Oratio de Vit. ob. Opori," for the "remorse," Mic. Toxita in pref. Testamenti, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, "De Philos* et Philos^{um} sectis," thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, "De Chymia" — "Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus." I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise "De Phlebotomia," and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work "De Natura Rerum," on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, "though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius." See Holcroft's translation, vol. iii. p. 179 — "The Eyes." While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries: — "Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vita nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur." (Gabrielis Clauderi S hediasma.)

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise — "Hermetis etc. Sapientia vindicata," 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in *Præfat. in Paramyr.*) declares "quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." "O *fœcunditas ingenii!*" adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) "*rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus.*" The rest were "*charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum.*" "*Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt,*" says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, "*Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ.* Bas. 1571;" Mic. Toxetis, "*Onomastica.* Arg. 1574;" Dornei, "*Dict.*

Parac. Franc. 1584;" and "*Pi Philæ Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio.* Paris." (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the "*laudanum*" of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred — (as he curiously says somewhere, "*Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?*") — is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms — "*Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit,*" *honoravit*, or *ordinavit* — for accounts differ.

STRAFFORD;

A TRAGEDY.

1837.

[Acted 1st May 1837 at Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Macready as Strafford and Miss Helen Faucit as Lady Carlisle.]

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

LONDON: *April 23, 1837.*

STRAFFORD.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.
Earl of HOLLAND.
Lord SAVILE.
Sir HENRY VANE.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH,
Earl of STRAFFORD.
JOHN PYM.
JOHN HAMPDEN.
The younger VANE.
DENZIL HOLLIS.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES.
Earl of LOUDON.
MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod.*
BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower.*
A Puritan.
Queen HENRIETTA.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, &c. Two of Strafford's children.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A House near Whitehall.*
HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE,
RUDYARD, FIENNES and many of the
Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other
Scots Commissioners.

Vane. I say, if he be here —

Rudyard. (And he is here!) —
Hollis. For England's sake let every
man be still

Nor speak of him, so much as say his
name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry
Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our
course :
And with it England's fate — think —
England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should
be still!
Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I
must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should sus-
pend
England's combined endeavour: little need
To name him!
Rudyard. For you are his brother,
Hollis!
Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard!
time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.
Rudyard. Do I forget her?
Hampden. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a
thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she
needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, curs-
ing as he went:
But David — five smooth pebbles from the
brook
Within his scrip . . .
Rudyard. Be you as still as David!
Fiennes. Here's Rudyard not ashamed
to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments:
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat
with us!

Rudyard. Let's hope for news of them now he returns —
 He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
 — But I'll abide Pym's coming.
Vane. Now, by Heaven,
 Then may be cool who can, silent who will —
 Some have a gift that way! Wentworth is here,
 Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
 Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
 Since that man left us, how his single arm
 Rolled the advancing good of England back
 And set the awful past up in its place,
 Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be, —
 How that man has made firm the fickle King
 (Hampden, I will speak out!) — in aught he feared
 To venture on before; taught tyranny
 Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
 To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
 That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
 How he turns Ireland to a private stage
 For training infant villanies, new ways
 Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
 Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
 To try how much man's nature can endure
 — If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
 Why, one more trick is added to the rest
 Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
 England may learn to bear: — how all this while
 That man has set himself to one dear task,
 The bringing Charles to relish more and more
 Power, power without law, power and blood too
 — Can I be still?
Hampden. For that you should be still.
Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now!
 The year he left us,
 The People in full Parliament could wrest
 The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
 And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
 A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
 That take up England's cause: England is here!
Hampden. And who despairs of England?
Rudyard. That do I,
 If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
 To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
 The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
 May yet be longed-for back again. I say,

I do despair.
Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this —
 Which all true men say after me, not loud
 But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer!
 This King, who treads our England under-foot,
 Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
 As bids him pause at each fresh outrage;
 friends,
 He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
 Some voice to ask, "Why shrink? Am I not by?"
 Now, one whom England loved for serving 50
 her,
 Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
 "The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
 "Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!
 So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
 But inasmuch as life is hard to take
 From England . . .
Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'Tis well said, Vane!
Vane. — Who has not so forgotten Runnymede! —
Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!
Vane. — There are some little signs of late she knows
 The ground no place for her. She glances 6
 round,
 Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
 On other service: what if she arise?
 No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
 The same bad man once more, with the same smile
 And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
 Or catch at us and rise?
Voices. The Renegade!
 Haman! Ahithophel!
Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,
 It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
 And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
 The cause of Scotland, England's cause as 74
 well:
 Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.
Vane. Hampden!
Fiennes. Stay, Vane!
Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane!
Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
 Have still a Parliament, and this your League

To back it; you are free in Scotland still:

While we are brothers, hope's for England yet.

But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench

This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?

Know you the man's self? what he dares? *Loudon.* We know,

All know — 'tis nothing new.

Vane. And what's new, then, in calling for his life? Why, Pym himself —

You must have heard — ere Wentworth dropped our cause

He would see Pym first; there were many more

10 Strong on the people's side and friends of his,

Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,

But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym

He would see — Pym and he were sworn, 'tis said,

To live and die together; so, they met At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,

Specious enough, the devil's argument Lost nothing on his lips; he'd have Pym own

A patriot could not play a purer part Than follow in his track; they two combined

10 Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;

One glance — you know Pym's eye — one word was all:

"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,

"I'll not leave you."

Hampden. Has he left Wentworth, then?

Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,

Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?

Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.

Hampden. Meanwhile Let Loudon read the Parliament's report

From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,

30 Is in the stand it makes. *Loudon!*

Vane. No, no!

Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hampden. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare

His anger, cast not England quite away In this her visitation!

A Puritan.

Seven years long

The Midianite drove Israel into dens And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

Pym enters.

Even Gideon!

Pym. Wentworth's come: nor sickness, care,

The ravaged body nor the ruined soul, More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,

Could keep him from the King. He has not reached

Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there

To lose no time and find him work enough. Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .

Loudon. Holds firm: We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Loudon and other Scots. Great God! An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!

Pym. The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's here;

But still some little form might be kept up. *Hampden.* Now speak, Vane! Rud-

yard, you had much to say!

Hollis. The rumour's false, then . . .

Pym. Ay, the Court gives out 50 His own concerns have brought him back:

I know

Tis the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons Whose part is played; there's talk enough, by this, —

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now To turn the record's last and bloody leaf

Which, chronicling a nation's great despair, Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord

Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried, He drew the sword on them and reigned in 60

peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots Was the last gentle entry: the new page Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth

thrust it down

"At the sword's point."

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym, England's and God's — one blow!

Pym. A goodly thing — We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing

To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:

Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,

To say how well the English spirit comes out

Beneath it! All have done their best, 70 indeed,

From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one
here,
When she is saved (for her redemption
dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns — it
dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great
Men?
We would not — no, we would not give
that up!

Hampden. And one name shall be
dearer than all names.

When children, yet unborn, are taught that
name
After their fathers', — taught what match-
less man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England? What if
Wentworth's should be still

That name?

Rudyard and others. We have just said
it, Pym! His death

Saves her! We said it — there's no way
beside!

I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck
down Joab

And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down!

Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the
whole land rise

And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!

England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the
trust again

Of England in her servants — but I'll
think

You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you,
friends!

Vane and others. Wentworth? Apos-
tate! Judas! Double-dyed

A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved
that man,

Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in
arm,

Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance

Fresh argument for God against the
King, —

Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble

thoughts,
(You've joined us, Hampden — Hollis,
you as well,)

And then left talking over Gracchus'
death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the
choicest clause

In the Petition of Right: he framed such
clause

One month before he took at the King's
hand

His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.

Pym. Too true! Never more,
never more

Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends — all here are fast my
friends —

But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!

You, Vane, — you, Rudyard, have no
right to trust

To Wentworth: but can no one hope with
me?

Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed Eng-
lish blood?

Like water?

Hampden. Ireland is Acelanda.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunt-
ing-ground

To please the King, now that he knows the
King?

The People or the King? and that King,
Charles!

Hampden. Pym, all here know you: 50
you'll not set your heart

On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .

Vane. [Shouting without.
There! he comes,

And they shout for him! Wentworth's at
Whitehall,

The King embracing him, now, as we
speak,

And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,

Now, while you tell us here how changed
he is!

Hear you?

Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and

brought the King

To love it as though Laud had loved it first, 60
And the Queen after; — that he led their

cause

Calm to success, and kept it spotless
through,

So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content

That violence, which something mars even
right

Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hampden. We meet here to accomplish
certain good

By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete, 70

In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and con-

firm,

As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt

reply

By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help
it shall —

But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts
too?

Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth
here —

Shall we break off the tactics which suc-
ceed

In drawing out our formidablist foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their
place?

10 Or count his presence as our conquest's
proof,

And keep the old arms at their steady
play?

Proceed to England's work! Fiennes,
read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or
fiercely paid

In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence

[*Shouting.*

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till
now,

Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best,
We English had free leave to think; till
now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament

20 In Scotland. But all's changed: they
change the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of
all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old
true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her,
there's no act

Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be

Something to England. I seek Wentworth,
friends.

SCENE II. — Whitehall.

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Wentworth. And the King?

Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, lean
on me! Sit then!

I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Wentworth. No; — or, Lucy, just your
arm;

I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:

30 After that, rest. The King?

Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.

Wentworth. Why? or, why now? —

They have kind throats, the knaves!
'hout for me — they!

Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely
soon:

Yet we took measures to keep off the
crowd —

Did they shout for you?

Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?

Does the King take such measures for
himself?

Beside, there's such a dearth of malcon-
tents,

You say!

Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp
at you.

Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The
King and I!

He's surely not disposed to let me hear
The fame away from him of these late 40
deeds

In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Went-
worth, purposes, I said,

To grant you, in the face of all the
Court . . .

Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore
the Court about us!

Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us, — then the King will grant me
— what?

That he for once put these aside and say —
"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"

Lady Carlisle. You professed

You would be calm. 50

Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!

How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,

How shall I serve the King? Time wastes
meanwhile,

You have not told me half. His footstep!
No.

Quick, then, before I meet him, — I am
calm —

Why does the King distrust me?

Lady Carlisle. He does not

Distrust you.

Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me;
you

Have even seemed to care for me: one
word!

Is it the Queen?

Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen:
the party

That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and 60
Holland.

Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane,
too, he's one too?

Go on — and he's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the

charge —

The charge!

Lady Carlisle. Oh, there's no charge,
no precise charge;

Only they sneer, make light of — one may
say,

Nibble at what you do.

Wentworth. I know! but, Lucy, I reckoned on you from the first! — Go on! — Was sure could I once see this gentle friend

When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away To help her . . . what am I?

Lady Carlisle. You thought of me, Dear Wentworth?

Wentworth. But go on! The party here!

Lady Carlisle. They do not think your Irish government

Of that surpassing value. . .

Wentworth. The one thing Of value! The one service that the crown May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes

In power, to vex me — not that they do vex, Only it might vex some to hear that service Decried, the sole support that's left the King!

Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.

Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps

The only hand held up in my defence May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles

Nibble? They nibble? — that's the very word!

Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,

Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .

Wentworth. Enough! 'tis too unworthy, — I am not

So patient as I thought. What's Pym about?

Lady Carlisle. Pym?

Wentworth. Pym and the People.

Lady Carlisle. Oh, the Faction! Extinct — of no account: there'll never be Another Parliament.

Wentworth. Tell Savile that! You may know — (ay, you do — the creatures here

Never forget!) that in my earliest life I was not . . . much that I am now! The

King

May take my word on points concerning

Pym

Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,

I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me, These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool

Who might be Pym's friend yet. But there's the King!

Where is he?

Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you arrive.

Wentworth. And why not here to meet me? I was told

He sent for me, nay, longed for me.

Lady Carlisle. Because, —

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now

About this Scots affair.

Wentworth. A Council sits?

They have not taken a decided course

Without me in the matter?

Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .

Wentworth. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?

Not the Scots' war? — without consulting me —

Me, that am here to show how rash it is, How easy to dispense with? — Ah, you too Against me! well, — the King may take his time.

— Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine

Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*]

Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,

Forsake the People!

I did not forsake The People: they shall know it, when the King

Will trust me! — who trusts all beside at once,

While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,

And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:

Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,

And am not trusted. But he'll see me now.

Weston is dead: the Queen's half English now —

More English: one decisive word will brush

These insects from . . . the step I know so well!

The King! But now, to tell him . . . no — to ask

What's in me he distrusts: — or, best begin By proving that this frightful Scots affair

Is just what I foretold. So much to say, And the flesh fails, now, and the time is

come, And one false step no way to be repaired.

You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM enters.

Wentworth. I little thought of you just then.

Pym. No? I Think always of you, Wentworth.

Wentworth. The old voice! I wait the King, sir.

Pym. True — you look so pale! A Council sits within; when that breaks up

He'll see you.

Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.

Pym. Oh, thank Laud! 74

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate: he'll not be long To-day: he only means to prove, to-day, We English all are mad to have a hand In butchering the Scots for serving God After their fathers' fashion: only that!

Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!

(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'Tis kind

To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
10 That I should know it had resolved on war Before you came? no need: you shall have all

The credit, trust me!

Wentworth. Have the Council dared — They have not dared . . . that is — I know you not.

Farewell, sir: times are changed.

Pym. — Since we two met At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,

You cut a figure, makes some slight return For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,

Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!

Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,

20 Just to decide a question; have you, now, Felt your old self since you forsook us?

Wentworth. Sir!

Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.

Think not I mean the advantage is with me. I was about to say that, for my part, I never quite held up my head since then — Was quite myself since then: for first, you see,

I lost all credit after that event

With those who recollect how sure I was Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.

30 Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,

Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I keep.

Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,

Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn, All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts Claim somewhat?

Wentworth. Keep your thoughts! believe the King

Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vane's

And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,

That I am discontented with the King!

Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,

40 Were I like you.
Wentworth. Like me?

Pym.

I care not much

For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord, Hampden's no lord, and Savile is a lord; But you care, since you sold your soul for one.

I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser

Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,

The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say, The Earldom you expected, still expect, And may. Your letters were the moving-est!

Console yourself: I've borne him prayers 50 just now

From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,

Words moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure,

As much attention as to those you sent.

Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so,

The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad

When it was shown me: I refused, the first!

John Pym, you were my friend — forbear me once!

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,

That all should come to this!

Wentworth. Leave me!

Pym. My friend, Why should I leave you?

Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this, And Hampden this!

Pym. Whose faces once were bright At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,

Because I hope in you — yes, Wentworth, you

Who never mean to ruin England — you Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream

In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true

And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,

And Hampden's friend!

This is the proudest day!

Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the 60 King!

The rough old room will seem itself again! We'll both go in together: you've not seen

Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you'll have

To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[*THE KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.*

Charles. Arrived my lord? — This gentleman, we know

Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.

[Pym goes out.]
You have made haste, my lord.

Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .

Charles. To see an old familiar — nay,
'tis well;

Aid us with his experience: this Scots'
League

And Covenant spreads too far, and we have
proofs

That they intrigue with France: the Fac-
tion too,

Whereof your friend there is the head and
front,

Abets them, — as he boasted, very like.

Wentworth. Sir, trust me! but for this
once, trust me, sir!

Charles. What can you mean?

Wentworth. That you should trust
me, sir!

Oh — not for my sake! but 'tis sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer — you

Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you
think

That I would die to serve you?

Charles. But rise, Wentworth!

Wentworth. What shall convince you?

What does Savile do

To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out
one's heart

And show it, how sincere a thing it is!

Charles. Have I not trusted you?

Wentworth. Say aught but that!

There is my comfort, mark you: all will be
So different when you trust me — as you
shall!

It has not been your fault, — I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to
know?

I am here, now — he means to trust me,
now —

All will go on so well!

Charles. Be sure I do —

I've heard that I should trust you: as you
came,

Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .

Wentworth. No, — hear nothing —

Be told nothing about me! — you're not
told

Your right-hand serves you, or your chil-
dren love you!

Charles. You love me, Wentworth:
rise!

Wentworth. I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
Can save you: only I. Sir, what must be?

Charles. Since Laud's assured (the
minutes are within)

— Loath as I am to spill my subjects'
blood . . .

Wentworth. That is, he'll have a war:
what's done is done!

Charles. They have intrigued with
France; that's clear to Laud.

Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any
way to meet

The war's expense?

Charles. He'd not decide so far

Until you joined us.

Wentworth. Most considerate!

He's certain they intrigue with France, 40
these Scots?

The People would be with us.

Charles. Pym should know.

Wentworth. The People for us — were
the People for us!

Sir, a great thought comes to reward your
trust:

Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,
Then, here.

Charles. In truth?

Wentworth. That saves us! that
puts off

The war, gives time to right their griev-
ances —

To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, —
Laud

So styles it, — tutors Scotland: all their
plans

Suppose no Parliament: in calling one

You take them by surprise. Produce the 50
proofs

Of Scotland's treason; then bid England
help:

Even Pym will not refuse.

Charles. You would begin

With Ireland?

Wentworth. Take no care for that:
that's sure

To prosper.

Charles. You shall rule me. You
were best

Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my

Friend

Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me
not!

Wentworth. Say it all o'er again — but
once again:

The first was for the music: once again!

Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may 60
have been reports,

Vain rumours. Henceforth touching
Strafford is

To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?

Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?

Charles. Ireland,

The Parliament, —

Wentworth. I may go when I will?

— Now?

Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?

Wentworth. My King!

But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I'd serve you any way.

Charles. You said just now this was the only way.

Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.

Charles. Strafford, spare yourself: You are so sick, they tell me.

Wentworth. 'Tis my soul That's well and prospers now.

This Parliament — We'll summon it, the English one — I'll care

For everything. You shall not need them much.

Charles. If they prove restive . . .

Wentworth. I shall be with you.

Charles. Ere they assemble?

Wentworth. I will come, or else

Deposit this infirm humanity

10 I the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King!

[*As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.*]

Charles. That man must love me.

Queen. Is it over then?

Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well, At least we shall not hear eternally

Of service — services: he's paid at least. *Charles.* Not done with: he engages to surpass

All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought

Nothing beyond was ever to be done. The war, *Charles* — will he raise supplies enough?

Charles. We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,

6 I have advised . . . we have decided on The calling — in Ireland — of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly! You agree to that?

Is that

The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed

As much.

Charles. This is too idle, *Henriette*! I should know best. He will strain every nerve,

And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice How sure he is of a long term of favour! He'll see the next, and the next after that;

No end to Parliaments!

Charles. Well, it is done.

50 He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,

The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here! you will summon them Here? Would I were in France again to see

A King!

Charles. But, *Henriette* . . .

Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!

Why should they bear your rule?

Charles. But listen, sweet

Queen. Let *Wentworth* listen — you confide in him!

Charles. I do not, love, — I do not so confide!

The Parliament shall never trouble us . . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we'll buy

The leaders off: without that, *Wentworth's* counsel

Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it

To have excuse for breaking it for ever, And whose will then the blame be? See you not?

Come, dearest! — look, the little fairy, now,

That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II.

SCENE I. — (As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters.

Rudyard. Twelve subsidies!

Vane. Oh, *Rudyard*, do not laugh At least!

Rudyard. True: *Strafford* called the Parliament —

'Tis he should laugh!

A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fiennes. — A stinging one, If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies! A stinging one! but, brother, where's your word

For *Strafford's* other nest-egg, the Scots' war?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

Fiennes. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.

Twelve subsidies! — Why, how now, *Vane*?

Rudyard. Peace, *Fiennes*!

Fiennes. Ah? — But he was not more a dupe than I,

Or you, or any here, the day that *Pym* Returned with the good news. Look up, friend *Vane*!

We all believed that *Strafford* meant us well

In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN enters.

Vane. Now, *Hampden*, Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:

I'd look the People in the face again: Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed

Better of Strafford!

Hampden. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!

Rudyard. Meantime, by flashes I make
shift to see

Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there's an army,
now:

Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland
bears

Another wrench (she dies the hardest
death!) —

Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,
'Tis spoken, so console yourselves!

Piennes. The jest!

We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs

A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

Rudyard. Mark now: we meet at
length, complaints pour in

From every county, all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber; we
lend

An ear. Ay, lend them all the ears you
have!"

Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you
find,

"Are fretful, and conceive great things of
you.

"Just listen to them, friends; you'll
sanction me

"The measures they most wince at, make
them yours,

"Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
"They say my levies pinch them, — raise
me straight

"Twelve subsidies!"

Piennes. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!

Hollis. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland — what has he to do with
that?

How could he speak his mind? He left
before

The Parliament assembled. Pym, who
knows

Strafford . . .

Rudyard. Would I were sure we know
ourselves!

What is for good, what, bad — who
friend, who foe!

Hollis. Do you count Parliaments no
gain?

Rudyard. A gain?

While the King's creatures overbalance us?
— There's going on, beside, among our-
selves

A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening

The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's
gone.

I'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies

Will be accepted by the King — our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer 40
To let us buy off ship-money!

Hollis. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rudyard. Will grant them! Hamp-
den, do you hear?

Congratulate with me! the King's the
king,

And gains his point at last — our own
assent

To that detested tax? All's over, then!
There's no more taking refuge in this room,

Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,
"We, England, are no party to our shame:

"Our day will come!" Congratulate with 50
me!

Pym enters.

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parlia-
ment, you say,

But we'll not have our Parliaments like
those

In Ireland, Pym!

Rudyard. Let him stand forth,
your friend!

One doubtful act hides far too many sins;
It can be stretched no more, and, to my

mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.

Other Voices. Good!

Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you.

Rudyard. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the

Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once, 6
Has saved us from betraying England.

Stay —

This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far

To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
That ship-money's disposed of long ago

By England: any vote that's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,

Support his Parliament!

Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you,
Pym?

We'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it 79
For England!

Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the
new levies!

No Bishops' war! At once! When next
we meet!

Pym. Much more when next we meet!
Friends, which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in
doubt,

Has fallen the most away in soul from me?
Vane. I sat apart, even now under
God's eye,

Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,

In presence of us all, as one at league With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand And say you pardon me for all the pain Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure? sure?

Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament While I speak here.

— And I must speak, friends, now! Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,

10 Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes His ancient path: no Parliament for us, No Strafford for the King!

Come, all of you, To bid the King farewell, predict success To his Scots' expedition, and receive Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be

Indeed a Parliament!

Vane. Forgive me, Pym!

Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have, indeed, No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me! He's with the King.

Come, Hampden and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane!

10 This is no sullen day for England, sirs! Strafford shall tell you!

Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

SCENE II. — Whitehall.

CHARLES and STRAFFORD.

Charles. Strafford!

Strafford. Is it a dream? my papers, here —

Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found So happy — (look! the track you pressed my hand

For pointing out) — and in this very room, Over these very plans, you tell me, sir, With the same face, too — tell me just one thing

That ruins them! How's this? What may this mean?

Sir, who has done this?

Charles. Strafford, who but I?

30 You bade me put the rest away: indeed You are alone.

Strafford. Alone, and like to be!

No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,

Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose

The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,

Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,

And I'm alone.

Charles. At least, you knew as much When first you undertook the war.

Strafford. My liege, Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap

A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over The loathsome business, not to be whole months

At slaughter — one blow, only one, then, peace,

Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both

I'd lead an Irish army to the West, While in the South an English . . . but you look

As though you had not told me fifty times 'Twas a brave plan! My army is all raised,

I am prepared to join it . . .

Charles. Hear me, Strafford!

Strafford. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design Is set aside — (where is the wretched paper?)

I am to lead — (ay, here it is) — to lead The English army: why? Northumberland

That I appointed, chooses to be sick — Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either? Is this my plan?

Charles. So disrespectful, sir?

Strafford. My liege, do not believe it!

I am yours,

Yours ever: 'tis too late to think about: To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step

Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.

But here! But here! I am so seldom here,

Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush Alone upon a giant in the dark!

Charles. My Strafford!

Strafford [examines papers awhile].

"Seize the passes of the Tyne!"

But, sir, you see — see all I say is true? My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause To ask the Parliament for help; whereas We need them frightfully.

Charles. Need the Parliament?

Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!

We can afford no error; we draw, now. Upon our last resource: the Parliament Must help us!

Charles. I've undone you, Strafford!

Strafford. Nay —

Nay — why despond, sir, 'tis not come to that!

I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!

Sir, do you turn from me?

Charles. My friend of friends!
Strafford. We'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!

Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
They're sitting, that's one great thing;
that half gives

Their sanction to us; that's much: don't despond!

Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!

The reputation of the People's help

Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

Charles. Good Strafford!

Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it: any sum —

For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots

The Parliament is ours — their staunch ally

Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow to strike!

What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?

Charles. Alas!

Strafford. My liege?

Charles. Strafford!

Strafford. But answer me!

Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?

Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked

For all of them. How many do they give?

Charles. You have not heard . . .

Strafford. (What has he done?) — Heard what?

But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!

[*The KING continuing silent.*]

You have dissolved them! — I'll not leave this man.

Charles. 'Twas old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Strafford. Old Vane?

Charles. He told them, just about to vote the half,

That nothing short of all twelve subsidies would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Strafford. Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me, The one last hope — I that despair, my hope —

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure

All bitterness one day, be proud again And young again, care for the sunshine too,

And never think of Eliot any more, —

God, and to toil for this, go far for this, Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart

And find Vane there!

[*Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.*]

Northumberland is sick:

Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads

The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure

The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:

If they refuse a loan — debase the coin And seize the bullion! we've no other choice.

Herbert . . .

And this while I am here! with you!

And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,

And, I once gone, they'll close around you, sir,

When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure

To ruin me — and you along with me!

Do you see that? And you along with me!

— Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men, And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,

If they — if She — charge me, no matter how —

Say you, "At any time when he returns "His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You know

My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Charles. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,

And . . .

Strafford. I! I! that was never spoken with

Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!

That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . . 60

Do you know, sir, I think within my heart, That you would say I did advise the war;

And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,

These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,

You will not step between the raging People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first

I knew it! Never was so cold a heart! Remember that I said it — that I never

Believed you for a moment!

— And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid 70

Because I could not share the whisperings With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?

I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh But heart of stone — of smooth cold frightful stone!

Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The
 Scots
 Goaded to madness? Or the English —
 Pym —
 Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you
 think
 I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
 They shall not know you? Hampden,
 Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, enter.

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured
 with your gracious countenance
 What shall a rebel League avail against
 Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
 So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
 The privilege of bidding me farewell
 Who haste to save the People — that you
 style

Your People — from the mercies of the
 Scots

And France their friend?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave grey
 eyes are fixed

Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hampden. The King dissolved us —
 'tis the King we seek

And not Lord Strafford.

Strafford. — Strafford, guilty too
 Of counselling the measure. [*To CHARLES.*]

[*Hush . . . you know —*

You have forgotten — sir, I counselled it)
 A heinous matter, truly! But the King
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell
 them so!) — he blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your
 charge:

I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
 Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty
 Binds me, by this fresh token of your
 trust . . .

[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,
 STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the
 door, in such a manner as to hide his
 agitation from the rest: as the King
 disappears, they turn as by one im-
 pulse to PYM, who has not changed his
 original posture of surprise.*

Hampden. Leave we this arrogant
 strong wicked man!

Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come
 out of this unworthy place.

To our old room again! He's gone.

[*STRAFFORD, just about to follow the
 KING, looks back.*

Pym.

Not gone!

[*To STRAFFORD.*] Keep trust! the old
 appointment's made anew:

30 Forget not we shall meet again!

Strafford.

So be it!

And if an army follows me?

Vane.

His friends

Will entertain your army!

Pym.

I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford: time
 shows.

Perish

Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
 Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
 Of one whose prowess shall achieve the
 feat!

What share have I in it? Do I affect
 To see no dismal sign above your head
 When God suspends his ruinous thunder
 there?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one
 of you! [*PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.*, go out.*

Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!

Lady CARLISLE enters.

You here, child?

Lady Carlisle.

Hush —

I know it all: hush, Strafford!

Strafford.

Ah? you know?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
 All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
 Under the best of auspices; 'tis morn,
 The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
 (He's always very young) — the trumpets
 sound,

Cups pledge him; and, why, the King
 blesses him —

You need not turn a page of the romance
 To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. In-
 deed,

We've the fair Lady here; but she
 apart, —

A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
 And rather old, weary, and far from sure
 His Squires are not the Giant's friends.

All's one:

Let us go forth!

Lady Carlisle.

Go forth?

Strafford.

What matters it?

We shall die gloriously — as the book says.

Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to
 Scotland?

Strafford.

Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northum-
 berland?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

Lady Carlisle.

Strafford,

The wind that saps these walls can under-
 mine

Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence
 creeps the wind?

Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look
 here!

A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
 In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym?

Old Vane

Can vanquish you. And Vane you think
 to fly?

Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer

Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.

— You do not listen!

Strafford. Oh, — I give that up!
There's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does

Against me! 'Tis so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!

Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .

Strafford. I want a little strife, beside;
real strife;

o This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?

Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,

As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!

I often found it on my lips to say

"Do not traduce me to her!"

Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .

Strafford. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,

— There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend

o "Of friends!" — My King! I would have . . .

Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?

Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.

Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford!
But you must renounce

This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?

Charles never loved you.

Strafford. And he never will.
He's not of those who care the more for men
That they're unfortunate.

Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?

Strafford. You that told me first
How good he was — when I must leave true friends

To find a truer friend! — that drew me here

o From Ireland, — "I had but to show myself

"And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile,
and the rest" —

You, child, to ask me this?

Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)

Then, friend,

I shall not see you any more.

Strafford. Yes, Lucy.
There's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Carlisle. (The King!
What way to save him from the King?

My soul —

That lent from its own store the charmed disguise

Which clothes the King — he shall behold my soul!)

Strafford. — I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me: I had never thought, indeed, 40
To speak, but you would perish, too, so sure!

Could you but know what 'tis to hear, my friend,

One image stamped within you, turning blank

The else imperial brilliance of your mind, —

A weakness, but most precious, — like a flaw

I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there

Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!

Strafford. When could it be? no!

Yet . . . was it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland 50
Should leave the presence-chamber?

Lady Carlisle. What?

Strafford. — That I described to you my love for Charles?

Lady Carlisle. (Ah, no —
One must not lure him from a love like that!

Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.

I shall not serve him worse for that one brief

And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)

And you are really bound for Scotland, then?

I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew

Will not be idle — setting Vane aside! 60

Strafford. If Pym is busy, — you may write of Pym.

Lady Carlisle. What need, since there's your King to take your part?

He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym —

Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Strafford. Child, your hair is glossier than the Queen's!

Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?

Strafford. Scotland — the weary way!
Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.

— A rival's, Strafford?

Strafford [showing the George]. He hung it there: twine yours around it, child!

Lady Carlisle. No — no — another time
— I trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot. Farewell.

The Court

Is dull; do something to enliven us

In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Carlisle.

Prosper — if

You'll think of me sometimes!

Strafford.

How think of him

And not of you? of you, the lingering
streak

(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Carlisle. *Strafford* . . . Well,

when the eve has its last streak

The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*]

Strafford.

That voice of hers —

10 You'd think she had a heart sometimes!

His voice

Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path!

His path! Where's England's path?

Diverging wide,

And not to join again the track my foot

Must follow — whither? All that forlorn

way

Among the tombs! Far — far — till . . .

What, they do

Then join again, these paths? For, huge

in the dusk,

There's — Pym to face!

Why then, I have a foe

To close with, and a fight to fight at last

20 Worthy my soul! What, do they beard

the King,

And shall the King want *Strafford* at his

need?

Am I not here?

Not in the market-place,

Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud

To catch a glance from *Wentworth*! They

lie down

Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some

day:

"Is he not watching for our sake?" Not

there!

But in *Whitehall*, the whited sepulchre,

The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only

one name

They'll curse in all those streets to-night.

Whose fault?

30 Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man

To represent the multitude, receive

All love in right of them — supplant them

so,

Until you love the man and not the king —

The man with the mild voice and mourn-

ful eyes

Which send me forth.

— To breast the bloody sea

That sweeps before me: with one star for

guide.

Night has its first, supreme, forsaken

star.

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord
HOLLAND and others of the Court.

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you
out?

Savile. And what kept you

From sharing their civility?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse

than the last,

If that may be. All's up with *Strafford*

there:

Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching

hither

Next Lord's-day morning. That de-

tained me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out, —

go on, —

Their Speaker — did the fellow *Lenthal*

say

All we set down for him?

Holland.

Not a word missed.

Ere he began, we entered, *Savile*, I

And *Bristol* and some more, with hope to

breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.

But such a gang of graceless ruffians, *Vane*, so

As glared at us!

Vane.

So many?

Savile.

Not a bench

Without its complement of burly knaves;

Your hopeful son among them: *Hampden*

leant

Upon his shoulder — think of that!

Vane.

I'd think

On *Lenthal's* speech, if I could get at it.

Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should

prove

For this unlooked-for summons from the

King?

Holland. Just as we drilled him.

Vane.

That the Scots will march

On London?

Holland.

All, and made so much of it,

A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure

To follow, when . . .

Vane.

Well?

Holland.

'Tis a strange thing, now!

I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,

A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice —

Pym, sir, was speaking! *Savile*, help me

out:

What was it all?

Savile. Something about "a matter" —

No, — "work for England."

Holland.

"England's great revenge"

He talked of.

Savile.

How should I get used to *Pym*

More than yourselves?

Holland. However that be.
 'Twas something with which we had
 nought to do.
 For we were "strangers" and 'twas "Eng-
 land's work" —
 (All this while looking us straight in the
 face)
 In other words, our presence might be
 spared.
 So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
 I settled to my mind what *Ugly* meant
 Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us
 out,
 Locked the doors after us, and here are we.
Vane. Eliot's old method . . .
Savile. Prithee, Vane, a truce
 To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke.
 And how to manage Parliaments: 'Twas
 you
 Advised the Queen to summon this: why,
 Strafford
 (To do him justice) would not hear of it.
Vane. Say rather, you have done the
 best of turns
 To Strafford: he's at York, we all know
 why.
 I would you had not set the Scots on Straf-
 ford
 Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my
 lord!
Savile. Was it I altered Strafford's
 plans? did I . . .

A Messenger enters.

Messenger. The Queen, my lords —
 she sends me: follow me
 At once; 'tis very urgent! she requires
 Your counsel: something perilous and
 strange
 Occasions her command.
Savile. We follow, friend!
 Now, Vane; — your Parliament will plague
 us all!
Vane. No Strafford here beside!
Savile. If you dare hint
 I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .
Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for
 quarrels — Pym
 Will overmatch the best of you; and,
 think,
 The Queen!
Vane. Come on, then: understand,
 I loathe
 Strafford as much as any — but his use!
 To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
 I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II. — *Whitehall.*

The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Carlisle. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
 Have hardly met.

Lady Carlisle. They met for that.

Queen. No, no.
 Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'Tis a
 jest.

Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider! 'Tis the House
 We summoned so reluctantly, which noth-
 ing

But the disastrous issue of the war

Persuaded us to summon. They'll break
 all.

Their spite on us, no doubt: but the old
 way

Is to begin by talk of grievances:

They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his
 speech.

Queen. Where's Vane? — That is,
 Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he
 leaves

His Presidency; he's at York, we know,

Since the Scots beat him: why should he
 leave York?

Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent
 for him.

Queen. Ah — but if

The King did send for him, he'd be known

We had been forced to call a Parliament —

A step which Strafford, now I come to go
 think,

Was vehement against.

Lady Carlisle. The policy

Escaped him, of first calling Parliaments
 To start, soon setting them upon their feet

And giving them a scare: but that is done.
 Did the King send for Strafford? He will
 come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail,
 madam!

Be ruined for his sake? what matters how?

So it but stand on record that you made

An effort, only one?

Queen. The King away

At Theobald's!

Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once: so
 he must

Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
 Of the report: then . . .

Lady Carlisle. — It will matter little
 What the King does. Strafford that lends
 his arm

And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE enters.

Vane. The Commons, madam,
 Are sitting with closed doors. A huge de-
 bate.

No lack of noise: but nothing, I should
 guess,

Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen [to *Lady CARLISLE*]. You hear?

Lady Carlisle. I do not hear

That the King's sent for!

Vane.

Savile will be able

To tell you more.

HOLLAND enters.

Queen. The last news, Holland?

Holland. Pym

Is raging like a fire. The whole House
means

To follow him together to Whitehall

And force the King to give up Strafford.

Queen. Strafford?

Holland. If they content themselves
with Strafford! Laud

Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank
too.

10 Pym has not left out one of them—I
would

You heard Pym raging!

Queen. Vane, go find the King!

Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE enters.

Savile.

Not to Whitehall—

'Tis to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal
way,

They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Savile. But the adage gives

Long life to threatened men. Strafford
can save

Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county: what has he to fear?

20 The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not
come.

Queen. Lucy, he will not come!

Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

Vane. Oh doubtless!

And bring destruction with him: that's his
way.

What but his coming spoilt all Conway's
plan?

The King must take his counsel, choose his
friends,

Be wholly ruled by him! What's the re-
sult?

The North that was to rise, Ireland to
help,

What came of it? In my poor mind, a
fright

30 Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Carlisle.

A fright?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he
thinks

To frighten him. [To the QUEEN.] You
will not save him then?

Savile. When something like a charge is
made, the King

Will best know how to save him: and 'tis
clear,

While Strafford suffers nothing by the
matter,

The King may reap advantage: this in
question,

No dinning you with ship-money com-
plaints!

Queen [to *Lady CARLISLE*]. If we dis-
solve them, who will pay the army?

Protect us from the insolent Scots?

Lady Carlisle.

In truth,

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate con-
cerns

Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.

Vane.

Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—than
he'll have

Against his old friend Pym.

Queen.

Why, he shall claim

Vengeance on Pym!

Vane.

And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,

Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly

And been so paid for it.

Holland.

He'll keep at York:

All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place

Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD enters.

Queen. You here!

Strafford. The King sends for me,
madam.

Queen.

Sir,

The King . . .

Strafford. An urgent matter that
imports the King!

[To *Lady CARLISLE*.] Why, Lucy, what's
in agitation now,

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!

Lady Carlisle.

'Tis welcome!

For we are proud of you—happy and
proud

To have you with us, Strafford. You were
staunch

At Durham: you did well there! Had
you not

Been stayed, you might have . . . we said,
even now,

Our hope's in you!

Vane [to *Lady CARLISLE*]. The Queen
would speak with you.

Strafford. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
 To signify my presence to the King?
Savile. An urgent matter?
Strafford. None that touches you,
 Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
 Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots —
 You would go free, at least! (They half divine
 My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
 The service I would render, much concerns His welfare.
Queen. But his Majesty, my lord, May not be here, may . . .
Strafford. Its importance, then, Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
 And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.
Queen [who has been conversing with VANE and HOLLAND]. The king will see you, sir!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst
 Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
 Let us not seem instructed! We should work
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves With shame in the world's eye. *[To STRAFFORD.]* His Majesty
 Has much to say with you.
Strafford. Time fleeting, too!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away? And She —
 What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
 What does she think of it? Get them away!
Queen [to Lady CARLISLE]. He comes to baffle Pym — he thinks the danger
 Far off: tell him no word of it! a time For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.
 Keep him in play, Lucy — you, self-possessed
 And calm! *[To STRAFFORD.]* To spare your lordship some delay
 I will myself acquaint the King. *[To Lady CARLISLE.]* Beware!
[The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE go out.]
Strafford. She knows it?
Lady Carlisle. Tell me, Strafford!
Strafford. Afterward!
 This moment's the great moment of all time.
 She knows my purpose?
Lady Carlisle. Thoroughly: just now
 She bade me hide it from you.

Strafford. Quick, dear child, The whole o' the scheme?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they
 Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
 Have once apprised the King! But there's no time
 For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.
Strafford. Known and approved?
Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.
Strafford. And the King — say, the King consents as well?
Lady Carlisle. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare
 To interpose. 40
Strafford. What need to wait him, then? He'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
 It vexed me to the soul — this waiting here.
 You know him, there's no counting on the King.
 Tell him I waited long!
Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean? Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)
Strafford. I knew
 They would be glad of it, — all over once,
 I knew they would be glad: but he'd contrive,
 The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it, An angel's making.
Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford, 50
 You were not wont to look so happy.
Strafford. Sweet,
 I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
 The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
 My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
 The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
 And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
 Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
 God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
 For Charles, but never to obey him more! While he endured their insolence at Ripon
 I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell 60
 The King I waited? All the anteroom
 Is filled with my adherents.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford — Strafford,
 What daring act is this you hint?
Strafford. No, no!
 'Tis here, not daring if you knew? all here!
[Drawing papers from his breast.]
 Full proof, see, ample proof — does the Queen know
 I have such damning proof? Bedford
 and Essex,

- Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?)
 The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville —
 Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!
Strafford. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
 And his losels, crushed! — Pym shall not ward the blow
 Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
 And the Cabal — I crush them!
Lady Carlisle. And you go —
 Strafford, — and now you go? —
Strafford. — About no work
 In the background, I promise you! I go
 10 Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
 Mainwaring!
Lady Carlisle. Stay — stay, Strafford!
Strafford. She'll return,
 The Queen — some little project of her own!
 No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Carlisle. Pym's strong, remember!
Strafford. Very strong, as fits
 The Faction's head — with no offence to Hampden,
 Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
 And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
 In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!
 [*Many of his Adherents enter.*]
 The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
 20 On the Scots' war; my visit's opportune
 When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
 To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
 Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
 We want the army here — my army, raised
 At such a cost, that should have done such good,
 And was inactive all the time! no matter,
 We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no — you!
 You, friend, make haste to York: bear this, at once . . .
 Or, — better stay for form's sake, see yourself!
 30 The news you carry. You remain with me
 To execute the Parliament's command,
 Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
 Take care there's no escaping at back doors:
 I'll not have one escape, mind me — not one!
 I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
 What these men dare!
Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare!
- Strafford.* I proved that long ago; my turn is now.
 Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens!
 Observe who harbours any of the brood
 That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
 Our coffers are but lean.
 And you, child, too,
 Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
 Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
 "Thorough" he'll cry! — Foolish, to be so glad!
 This life is gay and glowing, after all:
 'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
 Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
 Is worth the living for.
Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
 You seem . . .
Strafford. Well — do I not? I would be well —
 I could not but be well on such a day! 50
 And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import
 How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
 In Strafford.
Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!
Strafford. No farewell!
 I'll see you anon, to-morrow — the first thing.
 — If She should come to stay me!
Lady Carlisle. Go — 'tis nothing —
 Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
 Ere now: go, Strafford!
Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
 I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
 I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
 You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this 60
 hour
 To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
 "My friend of friends!"
 [STRAFFORD and the rest go out.
Lady Carlisle. The King — ever the King!
 No thought of one beside, whose little word
 Unveils the King to him — one word from me,
 Which yet I do not breathe!
 Ah, have I spared
 Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
 Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
 He is the better for my love. No, no —
 He would not look so joyous — I'll believe
 His very eye would never sparkle thus, 70
 Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III. — *The Ante-chamber
of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The
Adherents of STRAFFORD, etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians. — 1. I tell
you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell
sought

To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed
on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good counte-
nance.

Before these rufflers.

3. *Strafford here the first,*
With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that's
Bryan, hush —

The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers. — 1. Mark these
worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the
carcass is

"There shall the eagles" — what's the
rest?

3. For eagles
Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!

One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in
Geneva?

A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we
have leave to breathe.

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly?

Behold how privileged we be

That serve "King Pym"! There's Some-
one at Whitehall

Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

The Presbyterian. Nearer.

A Follower of Strafford.

We look to see him. [*To his Compan-
ions.*] I'm to have St. John

In charge; was he among the knaves just
now

That followed Pym within there?

Another. The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl ex-
pect

Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters.

Another. Why, man, they rush into the
net! Here's Maxwell —

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock
around

The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand
yet

Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Maxwell. Gentlemen,

Stand back! a great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*]

The Earl

Is at his work! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell,
what great thing!

Speak out! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friend,
I've a kindness for you! Friend,
I've seen you with St. John: O stockish-
ness!

Wear such a ruff, and never call to
mind

St. John's head in a charger? How, the
plague,

Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great
thing!

Another.

Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

First.

And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear
they came . . .

Came . . . just as we come!

[*A Puritan enters hastily and without
observing STRAFFORD's Followers.*

The Puritan. How goes on the work?

Has Pym . . .

A Follower of Strafford. The secret's
out at last. Aha,

The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow
the first!

Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
"King Pym has fallen!"

The Puritan.

Pym?

A Strafford.

Pym!

A Presbyterian.

Only Pym?

Many of Strafford's Followers. No,
brother, not Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as
well!

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can 40
it be true?

Another.

Lost! Lost!

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,

A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now!

The very thing! A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture,

To greet Pym as he passes!

[*The doors at the back begin to
open, noise and light issuing.*

Maxwell. Stand back, all!

Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with
Pym! And I!

Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!

He comes! Quick!

The Puritan. How hath the oppressor
ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the
wicked! . . .

The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote

The people in wrath with a continual 50
stroke,

That ruled the nations in his anger — he
is persecuted and none hindereth!

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues
in the greatest disorder, and amid
cries from within of "Void the
House!"*

Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
 The felon on that calm insulting mouth
 When it proclaimed — Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God!
 Was it a word, only a word that held
 The outrageous blood back on my heart — which beats!
 Which beats! Some one word — "Traitor," did he say,
 Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
 Upon me?
 10 *Maxwell.* In the Commons' name, their servant
 Demands Lord Strafford's sword.
Strafford. What did you say?
Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.
Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
 Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
 On the King's service! *Maxwell*, clear the way!
[The Presbyterians prepare to dispute his passage.]
Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
 Your tablets, fellow!
[To MAINWARING.] Give that to the King
 Yes, *Maxwell*, for the next half-hour, let be!
 Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL advances to take it.]
 Or, no — not that!
 Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
 All up to that — not that! Why, friend,
 20 When the King lays your head beneath my foot
 It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Strafford. This gentle *Maxwell*! — Do not touch him, *Bryan*!
[To the Presbyterians.] Whichever cur of you will carry this
 Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
 None?
[Cries from within of "STRAFFORD!"]
Slingsby, I've loved you at least: make haste!
 Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
 You then, my *Bryan*! *Mainwaring*, you then!
 Is it because I spoke so hastily
 30 At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[To the Presbyterians.] You!
 — Not even you? If I live over this,
 The King is sure to have your heads, you know!

But what if I can't live this minute through?
 Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[Louder cries of "STRAFFORD!"]
 The King! I troubled him, stood in the way
 Of his negotiations, was the one Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
 Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
 My safety guaranteed — having prepared
 A Parliament — I see! And at Whitehall
 The Queen was whispering with Vane — I see
 The trap! *[Tearing off the George.]*
 I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
 And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[His own Adherents disarm him.]
Renewed cries of "STRAFFORD!"
 England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
 Pray you now — Pym awaits me — pray you now!
[STRAFFORD reaches the doors: they open wide. HAMPDEN and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAFFORD kneels, the scene shuts.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — Whitehall.

The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady
 CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background.)
Lady Carlisle. Answer them, *Hollis*, for his sake! One word!
Charles. *[To HOLLIS.]* You stand, silent and cold, as though I were
 Deceiving you — my friend, my playfellow
 Of other times. What wonder after all? Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.
Hollis. Sir,
 It is yourself that you deceive, not me. You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
 That, since you've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
 All you can do for *Strafford* has been done.
Queen. If you kill *Strafford* — (come, we grant you leave,
 Suppose) —
Hollis. I may withdraw, sir?
Lady Carlisle. Hear them out
 'Tis the last chance for *Strafford*! Hear them out!

Hollis. "If we kill Strafford" — on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial — "We!"

Charles. Pym, my good Hollis — Pym, I should say!

Hollis. Ah, true — sir, pardon me! You witness our proceedings every day; But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us, Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.

Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
10 — That's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,

Their representatives; the Peers that judge Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close curtain

Must hide so much!

Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew, This day the curtain shall be dashed aside! It served a purpose.

Hollis. Think! This very day? Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

Charles. I will defend him, sir! — sanction the past

This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
20 At me, not Strafford!

Lady Carlisle. Nobly! — will he not Do nobly?

Hollis. Sir, you will do honestly; And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

Charles. Only, to do this now! — "deaf" (in your style)

"To subjects' prayers," — I must oppose them now!

It seems their will the trial should proceed, So palpably their will!

Hollis. You peril much, But it were no bright moment save for that.

Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree

Which props this quaking House of Privilege,

30 (Floods come, winds beat, and see — the treacherous sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm

Could save him, you'd save Strafford.

Charles. And they dare Consummate calmly this great wrong!

No hope?

This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?

Hollis. No plague in store for perfidy? — Farewell!

You called me, sir — [To Lady CARLISLE.] you, lady, bade me come

To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it, To learn how far such perfidy can go!

You, sir, concert with me on saving him

40 Who have just ruined Strafford!

Charles. I? — and how?

Hollis. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,

Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!

— He'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?

The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him

Got a good friend, — but he, the other mouse,

That looked on while the lion freed himself —

Fared he so well, does any fable say?

Charles. What can you mean?

Hollis. Pym never could have proved

Strafford's design of bringing up the troops To force this kingdom to obedience: 50

Vane —

Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

Charles. Vane?

Hollis. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no

Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,

Seal Strafford's fate?

Charles. Sir, as I live, I know Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?

I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!

Ask Vane himself!

Hollis. I will not speak to Vane, Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him

Were Strafford's death? 60

Hollis. Ha? Strafford cannot turn As you, sir, sit there — bid you forth, demand

If every hateful act were not set down In his commission? — whether you contrived

Or no, that all the violence should seem His work, the gentle ways — your own, — his part

To counteract the King's kind impulses — While . . . but you know what he could say! And then

He might produce, — mark, sir! — a certain charge

To set the King's express command aside, If need were, and be blameless. He might 70

add . . .

Charles. Enough!

Hollis. — Who bade him break the Parliament,

Find some pretence for setting up sword-law!

Queen. Retire!

Charles. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,

I know not: he is rash, a fool — I know
Nothing of Vane!

Hollis. Well — I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .

[*Turning to Lady CARLISLE.*] Gentle
lady,

The few words I would say, the stones
might hear

Sooner than these, — I rather speak to
you,

You, with the heart! The question, trust
me, takes

Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
Or England shall succumb, — but, who
shall pay

The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
10 You loved me once: think on my warning
now!

Charles. On you and on your warning
both! — *Carlisle!*

That paper!

Queen. But consider!

Charles. Give it me!
There, signed — will that content you? Do
not speak!

You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any
day,

According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same,
before

He rises to defend himself!

Queen. In truth?

20 That your shrewd Hollis should have
worked a change

Like this! You, late reluctant . . .

Charles. Say, *Carlisle*,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament — (I'll think
of you,

My *Hollis*!) say, we plotted long — 'tis
mine,

The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I
cursed

Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, *Carlisle*!

Lady Carlisle. Nay, fear not me! but
still

That's a bright moment, sir, you throw
away.

30 Tear down the veil and save him!

Queen. Go, *Carlisle*!

Lady Carlisle. (I shall see Strafford —
speak to him: my heart

Must never beat so, then! And if I tell
The truth? What's gained by falsehood?

There they stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How
vain

To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall
know,

Thoroughly know them!)

Queen. Trust to me! [*To*

CARLISLE.] *Carlisle*,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of
yours

Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Carlisle. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet — may it not be something
premature?

Strafford defends himself to-day — re-
serves

Some wondrous effort, one may well sup-
pose!

Lady Carlisle. Ay, *Hollis* hints as much.

Charles. Why linger then?

Haste with the scheme — my scheme: I
shall be there

To watch his look. Tell him I watch his
look!

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!

Lady Carlisle. At your pleasure.

Charles. Say —

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!

I shall be there, remember!

Lady Carlisle. Doubt me not.

Charles. On our return, *Carlisle*, we
wait you here!

Lady Carlisle. I'll bring his answer. 50

Sir, I follow you.

(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be —
'Tis the King's scheme!)

My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce con-
tent,

Because my poor name will not cross your
mind.

Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II. — A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall.

Many Groups of Spectators of the Trial.
Officers of the Court, &c.

1st Spectator. More crowd than ever!
Not know Hampden, man?

That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking
now.

No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either!

2nd Spectator. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

3rd Spectator. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl
escapes.

4th Spectator. I fear it: just a foolish
word or two

About his children — and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the
man

Who, sick, half-blind . . .

2nd Spectator. What's that Pym's

saying now

Which makes the curtains flutter? look!

A hand

Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!

5th Spectator. I had thought

Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?

2nd Spectator. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"

And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

Many Spectators.

There!

What ails him? no — he rallies, see — goes on,

And Strafford smiles. Strange!

An Officer. Haselrig!

Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for Pym

10 To make a stand against the ill effects Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig with-out?

Pym's message is to him.

3rd Spectator.

Now, said I true?

Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

1st Spectator. Never believe it, man!

These notes of Vane's

Ruin the Earl.

5th Spectator. A brave end: not a whit Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial

Is closed. No — Strafford means to speak again?

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spectator.

Why, the

Earl is coming hither!

Before the court breaks up! His brother, look, —

20 You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say!

2nd Spectator. Who's the veiled woman that he talks with?

Many Spectators.

Hush —

The Earl! the Earl!

[Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAFFORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. So near the end! Be patient — Return!

Strafford [to his Secretaries]. Here anywhere — or, 'tis freshest here!

To spend one's April here, the blossom-month:

Set it down here!

[They arrange a table, papers, etc.

So, Pym can quail, can cower Because I glance at him, yet more's to do?

What's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!

[To Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; whatso'er

It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!

'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you

that —

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days

Fighting for life and fame against a pack Of very curs, that lie through thick and

thin,

Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say

"Strafford" if it would take my life!

Lady CARLISLE.

Be moved

Glance at the paper!

Strafford.

Already at my heels!

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.

Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!

[Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD'S Council within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.

Strafford [setting himself to write and dictate]. I shall beat you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of St. John's 40

tricks,

In spite of Pym — your Pym who shrank from me!

Eliot would have contrived it otherwise. [To a Messenger.] In truth? This slip,

tell Lane, contains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter. Eliot would have disdained . . .

[Calling after the Messenger.] And Paul chide, say,

The only person who could answer Pym, Is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well!

It had not been recorded in that case, I baffled you.

[To Lady CARLISLE.] May, child, why look so grieved?

All's gained without the King! You saw your Pym quail?

What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,

But tranquilly resume my task as though Nothing had happened since I proposed

To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second time,

Not even against Laud, with his grey hair — Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To

make amends,

You, Lady, shall be here when I impeach Pym and his fellows.

Hollis.

Wherefore not protest

Against our whole proceeding, long ago? Why feel indignant now? Why stand thus

whole

Enduring patiently?

Strafford.

Child, I'll tell you —

You, and not Pym — you, the slight graceful girl

Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis — Why I stood patient! I was fool enough To see the will of England in Pym's will; To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait

Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .

[*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no such question! Law, — I grapple with their law! I'm here to try My actions by their standard, not my own!
10 Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest

To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me? *Lady Carlisle.* The King's so weak!

Secure this chance! 'Twas Vane, Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Strafford. Fit, — very fit, those precious notes of Vane,

To close the Trial worthily! I feared Some spice of nobleness might linger yet And spoil the character of all the past.

Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say

As much — to Pym, to England! Follow me!

20 I have a word to say! There, my defence Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care to own

My gladness, my surprise? — Nay, not surprise!

Wherefore insist upon the little pride Of doing all myself, and sparing him The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!

When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,

One image was before me: could I fail? Child, care not for the past, so indistinct, Obscure — there's nothing to forgive in it

30 'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins A new life, founded on a new belief In Charles.

Hollis. In Charles? Rather believe in Pym!

And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!

Say how unfair . . .

Strafford. To Pym? I would say nothing!

I would not look upon Pym's face again. *Lady Carlisle.* Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand!

[*STRAFFORD and his friends go out.*]

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!

Plead *Strafford's* cause with Pym! I have remarked

He moved no muscle when we all de- claimed

Against him: you had but to breathe — 40 he turned

Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter Pym, the Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, the Managers of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.*]

Rudyard. Horrible!

Till now all hearts were with you: I with- draw

For one. Too horrible! But we mistake Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away

The last spar from the drowning man. *Fiennes.* He talks

With St. John of it — see, how quietly! [*To other Presbyterians.*] You'll join us?

Strafford may deserve the worst: But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!

This Bill of his Attainder shall not have One true man's hand to it. 50

Vane. Consider, Pym! Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?

You cannot catch the Earl on any charge, —

No man will say the law has hold of him On any charge; and therefore you resolve

To take the general sense on his desert, As though no law existed, and we met

To found one. You refer to Parliament To speak its thought upon the abortive

mass Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints Hereafter to be cleared, distortions — ay, 60

And wild inventions. Every man is saved The task of fixing any single charge

On *Strafford*: he has but to see in him The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple!

I have heard some called England's enemy With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me!

Indeed you made me think I was your friend!

I who have murdered *Strafford*, how re- move

That memory from me? *Pym.* I absolve you, Vane.

Take you no care for aught that you have 70 done!

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!

He staggers through the ordeal: let him go, Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!

When *Strafford* spoke, your eyes were thick with tears!

Hampden. England speaks louder: who are we, to play

The generous pardoner at her expense,

Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fiennes. And England trusts you.

Hampden. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean
account —

Who would look nobly frank at her ex-
pense!

Fiennes. I never thought it could have
come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself familiar,
Fiennes,

20 With this one thought — have walked,
and sat, and slept,

This thought before me. I have done such
things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this
thought

To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right
at last.

Fiennes. Had we made out some weight-
ier charge!

Pym. You say

20 That these are petty charges: can we come
To the real charge at all? There he is
safe

In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy

Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:

The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when
you speak

The words, but where's the power to take
revenge

Upon them? We must make occasion
serve, —

The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.

Rudyard. But this unexampled course,
This Bill!

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
30 Of precedent and custom, and at once

Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon

The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his
hand

Upon his breast, and judge!

Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all be-
yond!

Rudyard and others. Forgive him! He
would join us, now he finds

What the King counts reward! The par-
don, too,

Should be your own. Yourself should bear
to Strafford

The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him? Strafford?

Have we to meet once more, then? Be it 40
so!

And yet — the prophecy seemed half ful-
filled

When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came
back at once

And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane — to-morrow?

Vane. Not before to-morrow —
So, time enough! I knew you would re-
lent!

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you in-
troduce

The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III. — *Whitehall.*

The KING.

Charles. My loyal servant! To defend 50
himself

Thus irresistibly, — withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the
future

Must recompense the past.

She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme —
Carlisle's mad scheme — he'll sanction it,
I fear,

For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter.

Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir: — my mission is 60
to save,

This time.

Charles. To break thus on me! Un-
announced!

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Charles. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much
from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will
you hear

A word upon my own account?

Charles. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we
tamed

The insolent brawler? — Strafford's elo-
quence

Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course 70
The People take: the Trial fails.

Charles. Yes, yes:
We are aware, sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! I would learn from your
own mouth

— (It is a matter much concerning me) —
Whether, if two Estates of us concede

The death of Strafford, on the grounds set
forth

Within that parchment, you, sir, can re-
solve

To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
10 Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should
guide

Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not, — I cast
Aside the measure.

Charles. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill?

Pym. I can.

Charles. He is my friend, sir: I have
wronged him: mark you,

Had I not wronged him, this might be.
You think

Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not
away,

We know you hate him) — no one else
could love

20 *Strafford:* but he has saved me, some
affirm.

Think of his pride! And do you know
one strange,

One frightful thing? We all have used the
man

As though a drudge of ours, with not a
source

Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household
cares,

Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause — to England if you
will!

Pym. Yes — think, my soul — to Eng-
land! Draw not back!

30 *Charles.* Prevent that Bill, sir! All
your course seems fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should
sign

The warrant for his death! You have said
much

I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I
take

The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is
yours —

Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?

Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his
hand,

40 Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;

Wentworth — he's gone now! — has talked
on, whole nights,

And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England
well,

And her King well?

Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!

Pym. Let me speak!
— Who may not speak again; whose spirit
years

For a cool night after this weary day:
— Who would not have my soul turn
sicker yet

In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe. 50

I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man —
I might say something, warn you, pray you,
save —

Mark me, King Charles, save — you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir —

(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question
moved

— "How long the Many must endure the
One,"

Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere! 60

Or —
Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a
net

And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady CARLISLE

Lady Carlisle. He loves you — looking
beautiful with joy

Because you sent me! he would spare you
all

The pain! he never dreamed you would
forsake

Your servant in the evil day — nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous
heart of his!

He needs it not — or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you — you,
sir,

Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . . 70
[Seeing Pym.] Well met!

No fear for Strafford! All that's true and
brave

On your own side shall help us: we are
now

Stronger than ever.

Ha — what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you
there?

Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Carlisle. This Bill! Your lip

Whitens — you could not read one line to
me

Your voice would falter so!

Pym. No recreant yet!

The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Carlisle. I am to save him! All
have shrunk beside;
'Tis only I am left. Heaven will make
strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let
both die!

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

Hollis. Tell the King then! Come in
with me!

Lady Carlisle. Not so!

He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hollis. Succeed?

No dream was half so vain — you'd rescue
Strafford

And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . .
lady,

The block pursues me, and the hideous
show.

To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the
while

He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I
have

To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I'll not see
Strafford!

Lady Carlisle. Only, if I succeed, re-
member — Charles

Has saved him. He would hardly value
life

Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait.
Go in —

You must go in to Charles!

Hollis. And all beside

Left Strafford long ago. The King has
signed

The warrant for his death! the Queen
was sick

Of the eternal subject. For the Court, —
The Trial was amusing in its way,

Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young

Amid rude mercenaries — you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,

What shall reward you?

Lady Carlisle. I may go, you think

To France with him? And you reward
me, friend,

Who lived with Strafford even from his
youth

Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.

I have learned somewhat of his latter life
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,

I ought to make his youth my own as well.

Tell me, — when he is saved!

Hollis. My gentle friend,

He should know all and love you, but 'tis
vain!

Lady Carlisle. Love? no — too late
now! Let him love the King!

'Tis the King's scheme! I have your
word, remember!

We'll keep the old delusion up. But,
quick!

Quick! Each of us has work to do, be- 40
side!

Go to the King! I hope — Hollis — I
hope!

Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while
we speak

Think where he is! Now for my gallant
friends!

Hollis. Where he is? Calling wildly
upon Charles,

Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I'll not look on
Strafford.

SCENE II. — *The Tower.*

STRAFFORD sitting with his Children.

They sing.

*O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

50

William. The boat's in the broad moon-
light all this while —

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera!*

And the boat shoots from underneath the
moon

Into the shadowy distance; only still

You hear the dipping oar —

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite
gone,

Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father: you 60
were to sleep.

Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not —
you must know

There's such a thing as . . .

William. You're too tired to sleep?

Strafford. It will come by-and-by and
all day long,

In that old quiet house I told you of:

We sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland?

Strafford. No!

Too many dreams! — That song's for
Venice, William:

You know how Venice looks upon the map —

Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

William. You've been to Venice, father?

Strafford. I was young, then.

William. A city with no King; that's why I like

Even a song that comes from Venice.

Strafford. *William!*

William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?

But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Strafford. See many lands, boy — England last of all, —

That way you'll love her best.

William. Why do men say

10 You sought to ruin her then?

Strafford. Ah, — they say that.

William. Why?

Strafford. I suppose they must have words to say,

As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside:

Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,

That called you . . . Oh, the names!

William. Don't mind her, father!

They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!

'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?

William. Why, not the King.

Strafford. Well: it has been the fate

Of better; and yet, — wherefore not feel sure

10 That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign

To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,

And raise the Genius on his orb again, — That Time will do me right?

Anne. (Shall we sing, *William*?

He does not look thus when we sing.)

Strafford. For Ireland,

Something is done: too little, but enough To show what might have been.

William. (I have no heart

To sing now! *Anne*, how very sad he looks!

Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)

30 *Strafford.* Forsook them! What, the common songs will run

That I forsook the People? Nothing more?

Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves

Noisy to be enrolled, — will register

The curious glosses, subtle notices,

Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see Beside that plain inscription of The

Name —

The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[*The Children resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.

Strafford. No, — *Hollis*? in good time! — Who is he?

Hollis. One

That must be present.

Strafford. Ah — I understand.

They will not let me see poor Laud alone. How politic! They'd use me by degrees

To solitude: and, just as you came in, I was solicitous what life to lead.

When *Strafford's* "not so much as Constantable

"In the King's service." Is there any means

To keep oneself awake? What would you do

After this bustle, *Hollis*, in my place?

Hollis. *Strafford!*

Strafford. Observe, not but that

Pym and you

Will find me news enough — news I shall hear

Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged

My newsman. Or, a better project now — What if when all's consummated, and the

Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly, —

What if I venture up, some day, unseen, To saunter through the Town, notice how

Pym,

Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly Into a tavern, hear a point discussed

As, whether *Strafford's* name were John or James —

And be myself appealed to — I, who shall myself have near forgotten!

Hollis. I would speak

Strafford. Then you shall speak, — not

now. I want just now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place

Is full of ghosts.

Hollis. Nay, you must hear me,

Strafford!

Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more, —

The minister! Who will advise the King Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,

And yet have health — children, for aught I know —

My patient pair of traitors! Ah, — but, *William* —

Does not his cheek grow thin?

William.

'Tis you look thin, Father!

Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.
Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, *Strafford*?
Strafford. No.
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, *Hollis*? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's? ¹
Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.
Strafford. True: what needs so great
a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when
he pleases, —
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.
Hollis. The King — I bear
His message, *Strafford*: pray you, let me
speak!
Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er
your song again!
[The Children retire.]
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing
new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as
much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping — bids me
trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show pre-
pared
On the other side of the river! Give at
once
His order of release! I've heard, as well
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the
Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . .
Where's the order?
Hollis. Spare me!
Strafford. Why, he'd not have
me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France,
perhaps?
Hollis. 'Tis for my children! 'Twas for
them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, ob-
serve
Their rules, and not return them prompt
their lie!

What's in that boy of mine that he should
prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles should ⁴⁰
know as much,
He too has children!
[Turning to HOLLIS's Companion.] Sir,
you feel for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it
have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I
know
Strangely, that somewhere it ha looked on
me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my
thanks:
For there is one who comes not.
Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!
Strafford. 'Truc, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.
Hollis. 'Tis a world's wonder: *Straf-*
ford, you must die!
Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set ⁵⁰
me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha!
Tears in truth?
We'll end this! See this paper, warm —
feel — warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is
there?
Whose promise? Read, and loud for God
to hear!
"Strafford shall take no hurt" — read it, I
say!
"In person, honour, nor estate" —
Hollis. The King . . .
Strafford. I could unking him by a
breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm ⁶⁰
On the King's faith. The King who
lives . . .
Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.
Strafford. "Put not your trust
"In princes, neither in the sons of men,
"In whom is no salvation!"
Hollis. Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for
you
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!
Charles. You would not see me, *Straf-*
ford, by your foot!
It was wrong from me! Only, curse me
not!
Hollis [to STRAFFORD]. As you hope
grace and pardon in your need,
Be merciful to this most wretched man. ⁷⁰
[Voices from within.]

Strafford. You'll be good to those children, sir? I know
 You'll not believe her, even should the Queen
 Think they take after one they rarely saw.
 I had intended that my son should live
 A stranger to these matters: but you are
 So utterly deprived of friends! He too
 Must serve you — will you not be good to him?
 Or, stay, sir, do not promise — do not swear!
 'You, Hollis — do the best you can for me!
 10 I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead,
 And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:
 I've found small time of late for my affairs;
 But I trust any of you, Pym himself —
 No one could hurt them: there's an infant, too.
 These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them.
 Nay — pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
 Your education, trials, much temptation,
 Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word —
 'Tis gone: I bless you at the last. You know
 20 All's between you and me: what has the world
 To do with it? Farewell!
Charles [at the door]. Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament! — go to them: I grant all Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
 Tell them to keep their money if they will:
 I'll come to them for every coat I wear
 And every crust I eat: only I choose
 To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
 — You never heard the People howl for blood,
 Beside!
Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now:
 30 The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
 Please you retire!
Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour!
Balfour. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.
Charles. Come with me, Strafford!
 You'll not fear, at least!
Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
 I charge you, as a dying man, forget
 You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
 Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say,
 Balfour,

The King was sorry: 'tis no shame in him:
 Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
 And that I walked the lighter to the block 41
 Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
 Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
 Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand
 When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
 His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
 To clear up the long error of a life
 And choose one happiness for evermore.
 With all mortality about me, Charles,
 The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death —
 What if, despite the opening angel-song, 50
 There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
 Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
 My death! Lead on! ere he awake — best, now!
 All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
 The crowd began to murmur? They'll be kept
 Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
 Now! But tread softly — children are at play
 In the next room. Precede! I follow —
Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many Attendants.

Lady Carlisle. Me!
 Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?
 [To the KING.] Well — as you ordered, 60
 they are ranged without,
 The convoy . . . [seeing the KING's state]
 [To STRAFFORD.] You know all, then,
 Why, I thought
 It looked best that the King should save you, — Charles
 Alone; 'tis a shame that you should owe me aught.
 Or no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
 At being saved by me?
Hollis. All true! Oh Strafford,
 She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
 And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
 Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
 See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
 The world's to learn its bravest story yet. 70
Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,
 To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.

Strafford. You love me, child? Ah,

Strafford can be loved

As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

Lady Carlisle.

Haste!

Advance the torches, Bryan!

Strafford.

I will die.

They call me proud: but England had no right,

When she encountered me — her strength to mine —

To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,

I fought her to the utterance, I fell,

I am her's now, and I will die. Beside,

The lookers-on! Eliot is all about

This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford.

I think if you

could know how much

I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!

Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!

Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,

I stay.

Hollis. For their sake!

Strafford. To bequeath a stain?

Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!

Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape — wake,

King! Bid him escape!

Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and

forsake the King?

I'll not draw back from the last service.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford!

Strafford.

And, after all, what is disgrace to me?

Let us come, child! That it should end this way!

Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not To end this way.

Lady Carlisle. Lean — lean on me!

Strafford.

My King!

Oh, had he trusted me — his friend of friends!

Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!

Strafford.

Not this way!

This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river:

our good boat

Is moored below, our friends are there.

Strafford.

The same:

Only with something ominous and dark, Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!

Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!

I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!

Lady Carlisle. To save the King, —

Strafford, to save the King!

[As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back; PYM follows slowly and confronts him.

Pym. Have I done well? Speak, Eng-

land! Whose sole sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard

To my own heart, — for whom my youth was made

Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up

Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here —

Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,

And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,

I hunted by all means (trusting that she 4c

Would sanctify all means) even to the block

Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel

No bitter pang than first I felt, the hour I swore that Wentworth might leave us,

but I

Would never leave him: I do leave him now.

I render up my charge (be witness, God!) To England who imposed it. I have done

Her bidding — poorly, wrongly, — it may be,

With ill effects — for I am weak, a man: Still, I have done my best, my human best, 5c

Not faltering for a moment. It is done. And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say

I never loved but one man — David not More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him

now:

And look for my chief portion in that world Where great hearts led astray are turned

again,

(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon: My mission over, I shall not live long,) —

Ay, here I know I talk — I dare and must, 6c

Of England, and her great reward, as all I look for there; but in my inmost heart,

Believe, I think of stealing quite away To walk once more with Wentworth — my

youth's friend

Purged from all error, gloriously renewed, And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .

This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase

Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood? — enwraps

The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!

Strafford. I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym.

As well die now! Youth is the only time 7c

To think and to decide on a great course: Manhood with action follows; but 'tis

dreary,

To have to alter our whole life in age — The time past, the strength gone! As well

die now.

When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right — not now!

- Best die. Then if there's any fault, fault
too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little
Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect
Church,
In some blind corner. And there's no one
left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail — if he have any, And he's
weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my
fate is nothing —
Nothing! But not that awful head — not
that!
- 10 *Pym.* If England shall declare such will
to me . . .
Strafford. Pym, you help England! I,
that am to die,
What I must see! 'tis here — all here!
My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!
What? England that you help, become
through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have chil-
dren, Pym —
Some who, without that, still must ever
wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
20 And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse
forth
- Clothed from my heart, lapped round with
horror till
She's fit with her white face to walk the
world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and
you —
Then to sit down with you at the board-
head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak,
but speak!
. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one
home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with, — hardly moaning in his
dreams,
She gnaws so quietly, — till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away! 30
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she's my
child?
You will not say a word — to me — to
Him?
Pym. If England shall declare such will
to me . . .
Strafford. No, not for England now, not
for Heaven now, —
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to
you!
There, I will thank you for the death, my
friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you well!
Pym. England, — I am thine own!
Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end, 40
Strafford. O God, I shall die first — I
shall die first!

SORDELLO.

1840.

[Sordello was a Mantuan Troubadour mentioned by Dante, some of whose poetry is extant. See Sismondi's "History of the Literature of the South of Europe," vol. i. An analysis of Browning's poem may be found in Mrs. Orr's Handbook.]

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND, — Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might, — instead of what the few must, — like; but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so: — you, with many known and unknown to me, think so — others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours, R. B.

LONDON: June 9, 1863.

SORDELLO.

BOOK THE FIRST.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's
friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the
din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named: o' the Naked Arm,¹ I single out

¹ See "Don Quixote," Part I. ch. 18.

Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe? 10

Verona . . . Never, — I should warn you
first, — Appears

Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,
And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the
dim

Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge 20
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment
past,

I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's
hem

The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand, 30
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four
ends,

Dropped down from heaven or cast up
from hell,

To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's
trick,

Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,
And shaming her; 'tis not for fate to choose
Silence or song because she can refuse
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to
ache

Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our 40
sake:

I have experienced something of her spite;
But there's a realm wherein she has no
right

And I have many lovers. Say, but few
Friends fate accords me? Here they are:
now view

- The host I muster! Many a lighted face
Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;
What else should tempt them back to taste
our air
Except to see how their successors fare?
My audience! and they sit, each ghostly
man
Striving to look as living as he can,
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not
fret
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's
spleen
- Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I
mean
The living in good earnest — ye elect
Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
To glean your bland approvals. Then,
appear,
Verona! stay — thou, spirit, come not
near
Now — not this time desert thy cloudy
place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure
face!
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for
thee!
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian,¹
grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding
screech
Braying a Persian shield, — the silver
speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear!
What heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies?
- Lo, the past is hurled
In twain: in-thrust, out-staggering on the
world.
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich
wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was
stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame
turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single
eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
- But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group; and not
a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in
care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken
root
In every breast, and now these crushed its
fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way
It worked while each grew drunk! Men
grave and grey
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow
About the hollows where a heart should be;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in
blood
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined
since
A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat
Ferrara, — over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper
snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.
Immediate succour from the Lombard
League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Gueff cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces, late agape, are now agast.
"Prone is the purple pavis;¹ Este makes
"Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
"To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
"Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
"Like his! The patron tells ye, once for
all,
"There be sound reasons that preferment
fall
"On our beloved" . . .
"Duke o' the Rood, why not?"
Shouted an Estian, "grudge ye such a lot?
"The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her
own,
"Some stealthy trick to better beasts un-
known,
"That quick with prey enough her hunger
blunts,
"And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion
hunts."
"Taurello," quoth an envoy, "as in
wane
"Dwelt at Ferrera. Like an osprey fain
"To fly but forced the earth his couch to
make
"Far inland, till his friend the tempest
wake,

¹ Æschylus.¹ Shield.

Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
 "That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let
 "Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
 "The aroused hurricane ere it enrougns
 "The sea it means to cross because of him.
 "Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;
 "Creep closer on the creature! Every day
 "Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
 "Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
 "Telling upon his perished finger-tips
 "How many ancestors are to depose
 "Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
 "Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
 "Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
 "When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
 "Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street
 "Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
 "With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
 "This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
 20 "To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'
 "Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar
 "To permanent tranquillity, may jar
 "'No longer' — so! his back is fairly turned?
 "The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
 "The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk
 "A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk
 "In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
 "Old Salinguerra back again — I say,
 "Old Salinguerra in the town once more
 30 "Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
 "Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;
 "Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
 "Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
 "He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,
 "Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce
 "Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
 "On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth
 "To see troop after troop encamp beneath
 "I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
 40 "It took so many patient months to snatch
 "Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
 "Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls

"A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'
 "Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
 "Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
 "Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
 "No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
 "Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
 "Quietly through the town they rode, jog jog;
 "Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue
 "Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows
 "Not the least sign of life' — whereat arose
 "A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?
 "'I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
 "'Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on,
 "Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
 "Into the trap! —"
 Six hundred years ago!
 Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
 Albeit the world, our busy brother, drills
 60 His sprawling path through letters anciently
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,
 Flung John of Brienne's favour from his casque,
 Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
 70 Was excommunicate that very year.
 "The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!"
 Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
 Its cry: what cry?
 "The Emperor to come!"
 His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,
 And carried it, till now, with little care — 80
 Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
 Us longer? — cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
 Which nought save such another throe can wrest
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown

- Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle
thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself,
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the
bruised
And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused
For that! — sunlight, 'neath which, a scum
at first,
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
to Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled
main,
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold
again,
So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to
brood
O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazing new clasps, ties, filaments,
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one:
"The Pope, for us the People, who begun
20 "The People, carries on the People thus,
"To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with
us!"
See you?
Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.
"Hill-cat" — who called him so? — the
gracefullest
Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet
purr
Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon
scout
— Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without
30 A country or a name, presumes to couch
Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
Conrad describes no fitter, rear or van
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they en-
rolled
That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,
Cartigion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's
fief!
No laughter when his son, "the Lombard
Chief"
40 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness
now —
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by day
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join
with ridge
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's
dreams,
— A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed
By its new neighbourhood: perchance the
vaunt
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
"Your Este," come to pass. The sire led 60
in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and
tall
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that
neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry
cheek
Proved 'twas some fiend; not him, the
man's-flesh went
To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt
the bole
Successively, why should not he shed blood 70
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive
o'er,
Propped on his truncheon in the public
way,
While his lord lifted writen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliero's convent.
Hill-cats, face
Our Azzo, our Guelph Lion! Why disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun) 80
By trumpeting the Church's princely son?
— Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in
fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old
monk
Found it intolerable to be sunk
(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains 90
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to
stand
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
The same night wears. Verona's rule
of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,

Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare

Of cressets¹ vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that's seen or heard until we shut

The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last!
Why strange

Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet rooms? Your finger—thus—
you push

A spring, and the wall opens, would you
rush

Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
10 Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench) with sharpened
ear

A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers
now;

Nor any . . . does that one man sleep
whose brow

The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?
What woman stood beside him? not the
more

Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between! Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,

20 Her presence wholly poured upon the
gloom

Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to
breathe,

Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning
breaks

On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
30 Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid
away

Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
In his wool wedding-robe.

For he—for he,
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,

(If I should falter now)—for he is thine!
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!

A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along

40 A sempiternal path with dance and song
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God—

Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops
With no quenched lights, desponds with
no blank troops

Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
Utterly with thee, its shy element

Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, disen-
twine

That under-current soft and argentine 54
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt
with glass

In John's transcendent vision,—launch
once more

That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutton hell disgorgeth filthiest
gloom,

Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters
slope

Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's
eye

In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,— 60
I would do this! If I should falter now!

In Mantua territory half is slough,
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet oaks
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio
chokes

With sand the summer through: but 'tis
morass

In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
Some thirty years before this evening's
coil,

One spot reclaimed from the surrounding
spoil,

Goito; just a castle built amid
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid 74
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard
bound

The rest. Some captured creature in a
pound,

Whose artless wonder quite precludes dis-
tress,

Secure beside in its own loveliness,
So peered with airy head, below, above,
The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
To glean among at grape-time. Pass
within.

A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at 80
last

A maple-panelled room: that haze which
seems

Floating about the panel, if there gleams
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
And in light-graven characters unfold

The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what
shade

Marred them a moment, those slim pillars
made,

Cut like a company of palms to prop
The roof, each kissing top entwined with
top,

Leaning together; in the carver's mind
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek 94
combined

With straining forehead, shoulders purpled,
hair
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear
A vintage; graceful sister-palms! But
quick
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see;
thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine
slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—
A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a
group
Round it, — each side of it, where'er one
sees, —
10 Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated
flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the
snow.
The font's edge burthens every shoulder,
so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half
closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs
disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to
veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek
so pale,
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless
length
o Dead as a buried vestal whose whole
strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the
dregs.
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space: and awe
30 Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-
chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our
maiden shrinks
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less the
stain
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead
slipt
From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its
charge?
Then with a step more light, a heart more
large,
He may depart, leave her and every one
40 To linger out the penance in mute stone.
Ah, but Sordello? 'Tis the tale I mean
To tell you.

In this castle may be seen,
On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,
Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile
Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest
smile
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see him 50
lurk
('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras length of broidered forms,
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter
bright
— Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
— Look, now he turns away! Yourselves 60
shall trace
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and
fine,
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she
frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious
names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air 70
Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life; and day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
You recognise at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is
furled
(As though she would not trust them with
her world)
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid 80
through.
How can such love? — like souls on each
full-fraught
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove
A curse that haunts such natures — to pre-
clude
Their finding out themselves can work no
good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavour, — they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own
soul,
Availing it to purpose, to control, 90
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy

And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty
wake
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine —
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic
rod;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.
So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and
the stir, —
A need to blend with each external charm,
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and
warm, —
In something not themselves; they would
belong
To what they worship — stronger and
more strong
Thus prodigally fed — which gathers
shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend; light had birth ere moons and
suns,
Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were
strown
Hither and thither, foundering and blind:
When into each of them rushed light — to
find
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revelation born a
twin
With a distinctest consciousness within,
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct
nursed
In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their own,
A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along —
Whose fault? So, homage, other souls
direct
Without, turns inward. "How should this
deject
"Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore
strength be quelled
"Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
"Organs are missed that clog the world,
inert,

"Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
"Like thine — existence cannot satiate,
"Cannot surprise? Laugh thou at en-
vious fate,
"Who, from earth's simplest combination
stamp
"With individuality — uncramp'd
"By living its faint elemental life,
"Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence,
rife
"With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
"Equal to being all!"
In truth? Thou hast
Life, then — wilt challenge life for us: our
race
Is indicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills? 6a
Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for man-
kind's good
Its nature just as life and time accord
"— Too narrow an arena to reward
"Emprize — the world's occasion worth-
less since
"Not absolutely fitted to evince
"Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened 7a
sphere
Contain it, — to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —
So that Sordello . . .
Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism;
Witness a Greek or two from the abyss
That stray through Florence-town with
studious air,
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon: look you! The same orange
haze, —
The same blue stripe round that — and,
in the midst,
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid,
who didst
Pursue the dizzy painter!
Woe, then, worth 9
Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house!
Go back to the beginning, rather; blend
It gently with Sordello's life; the end

Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to
screen

The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antoinine)

Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily; and out there curled
10 Just such another plague, for half the
world

Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and
couch asquat,

Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's¹ choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's

6 Glided his youth away; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world: but this appeared his own

To wander through at pleasure and alone.
The castle too seemed empty; far and wide
Might he disport; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict —

Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault

30 Where those font-bearers expiate their
fault,

The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua: there he
strolled.

Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him — all his clue
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.

And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;

40 The day's adventures for the day suffice —
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the
trees,

Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or
scant,

Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters
quite,

And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard² dissheathed;

50 As ever, round each new discovery,
wreathed

Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine

Its novel friend at any risk, would fling
In gay profusion forth: a fickliest king,
Confessed those minions! — eager to dis-
pense

So much from his own stock of thought
and sense

As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favourite. Thus 6
they wore

A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —
Those upland objects each of separate
name,

Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque;
Only, preserving through the mad bur-
lesque

A grave regard. Conceive! the orpine³
patch

Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch 70
The day those archers wound along the
vines —

Related to the Chief that left their lines
To climb with clinking step the northern
stair

Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached
thrall:

He o'er-fersteoning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth
to height,

From barbarian to battlement: so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung 80
Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-
edged.

This world of ours by tacit pact is
pledged

To laying such a spangled fabric low
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was balked here:
doubt

Rose tardily in one so fenced about
From most that nurtures judgment; —
care and pain:

Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain, 90
Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys — contrive some yet amid the
dearth,

Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and
warp —

¹ Apollo (the bowman).

² A fragment.

³ Stonecrop.

A heron's nest beat down by March winds
sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and unfilmed
eyes
Warm in the brake — could these undo
the trance
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat
fern-seed¹
And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word) "genius" dawned with
throes and stings
And the whole fiery catalogue, while
springs,
Summers, and winters quietly came and
went.
Time put at length that period to content,
By right the world should have imposed:
bereft
Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their nature with his
own:
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him! Though
he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleecing quite
with rain,
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling
crane
Lay bare. That's gone: yet why re-
nounce, for that,
His disenchanted tributaries — flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be
borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy: — why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered, "little
boots
"Beholding other creatures' attributes
"And having none!" or, say that it sufficed,
"Yet, could one but possess, oneself,"
(enticed
Judgment) "some special office!" Nought
beside
Serves you? "Well then, be somehow
justified
"For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
"And concentrate, rather than swell, the
tribe
"Of actual pleasures: what, now, from
without
"Effects it? — proves, despite a lurking
doubt.
"Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble
spared?

¹ Made the eater invisible.

"That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you
fared
"The better for them?" Thus much
craved his soul.
Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true; if sure of nought beside, most
sure
Of its own truth at least; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below:
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more 50
Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in
vain,
And say for them their stifled thoughts
aloud.
So, they must ever live before a crowd:
—"Vanity," Naddo tells you. 60
Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just
alive,
That archer-troop? Forth glided — not
alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd
glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird
perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
— But the entire out-world: whatever, 70
scraps
And snatches, song and story, dreams
perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Not counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other, — such now dared to
stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every
hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he dis-
cerned
A sort of human life: at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his 80
brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor¹ and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a
stuff
To work his pleasure on; there, sure
enough:
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?

¹ Vassal.

- Are they to simply testify the ways
 He who convoked them sends his soul
 along
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's
 brood-song?
 — While they live each his life, boast each
 his own
 Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
 In some one point where something dearest
 loved
 Is easiest gained — far worthier to be
 proved
 Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!
 No simple and self-evident delights,
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,
 Contrasts or combinations, new and
 strange,
 Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognised
 By this, the sudden company — loves
 prized
 By those who are to prize his own amount
 Of loves. Once care because such make
 account,
 Allow that foreign recognitions stamp
 The current value, and his crowd shall
 vamp
 Him counterfeits enough; and so their
 print
 Be on the piece. 'Tis gold, attests the mint,
 20 And "good," pronounce they whom his
 new appeal
 Is made to: if their casual print conceal —
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
 What he has lived without, nor felt the
 loss —
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
 — What matter? So must speech ex-
 pand the dumb
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello,
 late
 Whom no poor woodland-sights could
 satiate,
 Betakes himself to study hungrily
 Just what the puppets his crude phantasy
 30 Supposes notabest, — popes, kings, priests,
 knights, —
 May please to promulgate for appetites;
 Accepting all their artificial joys
 Not as he views them, but as he employs
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock
 Of attributes, whereon — a marshalled
 flock
 Of authorised enjoyments — he may spend
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
 With tree and flower — nay more entirely,
 else
 'Twere mockery: for instance, "How ex-
 cels
 40 "My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised
 the youth
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
 Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent
 "Remissly? Be it so — my head is bent
 "Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
- "What if he stalks the Trentine-pass?
 Yon steep
 "I climbed an hour ago with little toil:
 "We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
 "The Guelph's paid stabber, carelessly
 afford
 "Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o'
 the sword
 "Baffling the treason in a moment?" 50
 Here
 No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer
 To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a
 brand
 With Ecelin's success — try, now! He
 soon
 Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
 From earth; left each abortive boy's-
 attempt
 For feats, from failure happily exempt,
 In fancy at his beck. "One day I will
 "Accomplish it! Are they not older still
 "— Not grown-up men and women? 60
 'Tis beside
 "Only a dream; and though I must abide
 "With dreams now, I may find a thorough
 vent
 "For all myself, acquire an instrument
 "For acting what these people act; my
 soul
 "Hunting a body out may gain its whole
 "Desire some day!" How else express
 chagrin
 And resignation, show the hope steal in
 With which he let sink from an aching
 wrist
 The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a
 gold shaft hissed
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down 70
 Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's
 Town
 "Is gained him back!" Why bend rough
 ash-bows more?
 Thus lives he: if not careless as before,
 Comforted: for one may anticipate,
 Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose
 names
 Startle, real places of enormous fames
 Este abroad and Ecelin at home
 To worship him, — Mantua, Verona.
 Rome
 To witness it. Who grudges time so 80
 spent?
 Rather test qualities to heart's content —
 Summon them, thrice selected, near and
 far —
 Compress the starriest into one star,
 And grasp the whole at once!
 The pageant thinned
 Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
 His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
 Back fell the simpler phantasms; every
 side

The strong clave to the wise; with either
 classed
 The bauteous; so, till two or three
 amassed
 Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
 Themselves eventually, — graces loosed,
 Strengths lavished, — all to heighten up
 One Shape
 Whose potency no creature should escape.
 Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?
 Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the
 stalk,
 Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine
 The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline.¹ —
 Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and
 chapped,
 Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-
 capped,
 Are dates plucked from the bough John
 Brienne sent
 To keep in mind his sluggish armament
 Of Canaan: — Friedrich's, all the pomp
 and fierce
 Demeanour! But harsh sounds and
 sights transpierce
 So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words
 are spells
 On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
 Has thunder for its slave; but where's the
 need
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
 Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,
 Nor much unlike the words his women
 croon
 Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
 Each, as a worn-out queen's face some
 remind
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Egla-
 mor
 "Made that!" Half minstrel and half
 emperor,
 What but ill objects vexed him? Such he
 slew.
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
 And these a gracious hand advanced to
 thrones
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and tor-
 ture this,
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
 He had discovered, as our world before,
 Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
 The youth — what thefts of every clime
 and day
 Contributed to purfle the array

He climbed with (June at deep) some close
 ravine
 Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
 Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
 Elate with rains: into whose streamlet
 dipped
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet
 sock —
 Though really on the stubs of living rock
 Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,
 Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof, 50
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
 Born of the simmering quiet, there to
 die.
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
 Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
 There gendered the grave maple stocks at
 ease.
 And, proud of its observer, straight the
 wood
 Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
 A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed
 o'er)
 So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no 60
 more
 Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dis-
 patched)
 Each clump, behold, was glistening de-
 tached
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would
 hang
 White summer-lightnings; as it sank and
 sprang
 To measure, that whole palpitating breast
 Of heaven, 'twas Apollo, nature prest
 At eve to worship.
 Time stole: by degrees
 The Pythons perish off; his votaries 70
 Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
 Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals
 seem
 Emphatic; only girls are very slow
 To disappear — his Delians! Some that
 glow
 O' the instant, more with earlier loves to
 wrench
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to
 quench;
 Alike in one material circumstance —
 All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
 His Daphne! "We secure Count Rich- 80
 ard's voice
 "In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
 "As our Taurello," say his faded friends,
 "By granting him our Palma!" — the sole
 child,
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
 Wedded and turned him wicked: "but the
 maid

¹ *Emir al Maromenim*, Prince of the Faith-
 ful.

"Rejects his suit," those sleepy women
 boast.
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
 Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world
 Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses
 curled
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and
 wound
 About her like a glory! even the ground
 Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe
 not, breathe
 Not! — poised, see, one leg doubled under-
 neath,
 Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
 to Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
 O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool
 air,
 The 'vein-streaks swollen a richer violet
 where
 The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
 On her slight prop, each flat and outspread
 palm,
 As but suspended in the act to rise
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her
 eyes
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she
 meets
 Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.
 Time fleets:
 That's worst! Because the pre-appointed
 age
 to Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
 And crowd she promised. Lean he grows
 and pale,
 Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
 Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet
 alone
 He farries here! The earnest smile is
 gone.
 How long this might continue matters not;
 — For ever, possibly; since to the spot
 None come: our lingering Taurello quits
 Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
 Back to her place disburthened of a care.
 30 Strange — to be constant here if he is
 there!
 Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both
 Goad Ecein alike, Romano's growth
 Is daily manifest, with Azzo dumb
 And Richard wavering: let but Friedrich
 come,
 Find matter for the minstrelsy's report
 — Lured from the Isle and its young
 Kaiser's court
 To sing us a Messina morning up,
 And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
 Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
 40 Northward to Provence that, and thus far
 south
 The other! What a method to apprise
 Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies,
 Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
 Records! and his performance makes a
 tour,

For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
 Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
 Until the Formidable House is famed
 Over the country — as Taurello aimed,
 Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
 The novelty. Such games, her absence 50
 stopped,
 Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
 No longer, in the light of day pursues
 Her plans at Mantua: whence an accident
 Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed
 content
 Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
 The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE woods were long austere with snow:
 at last
 Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
 Larches, scattered through pine-tree soli-
 tudes,
 Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' 60
 the woods
 "Our buried year, a witch, grew young
 again
 "To placid incantations, and that stain
 "About were from her cauldron, green
 smoke blent
 "With those black pines" — so Eglamor
 gave vent
 To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
 From his companion; brother Naddo
 shook
 The solemnest of brows: "Beware," he
 said,
 "Of setting up conceits in nature's stead!"
 Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought
 so sure
 As that to-day's adventure will secure 70
 Palma, the visioned lady — only pass
 O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted
 grass,
 Under that brake where sundawn feeds the
 stalks
 Of withered fern with gold, into those
 walks
 Of pine and take her! Buoyantly he went.
 Again his stooping forehead was besprent
 With dew-drops from the skirting ferns.
 Then wide
 Opened the great morass, shot every side
 With flashing water through and through;
 a-shine,
 Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape 80
 divine,
 Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour,
 glanced
 Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
 But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
 Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
 A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick

Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt
 or loach,
 A sudden pond would silently encroach
 This way and that. On Palma passed.
 The verge
 Of a new wood was gained. She will
 emerge
 Flushed, now, and panting, — crowds to
 see, — will own
 She loves him — Boniface to hear, to
 groan,
 To leave his suit! One screen of pine-
 trees still
 Opposes: but — the startling spectacle —
 10 Mantua, this time! Under the walls — a
 crowd
 Indeed, real men and women, gay and
 loud
 Round a pavilion. How he stood!
 In truth
 No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
 In its prime now — and where was
 homage poured
 Upon Sordello? — born to be adored,
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce
 made
 To cope with any, cast into the shade
 By this and this. Yet something seemed
 to prick
 And tingle in his blood; a sleight — a
 trick —
 20 And much would be explained. It went
 for nought —
 The best of their endowments were ill
 bought
 With his identity: nay, the conceit,
 That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
 Was not so vain — list! The word,
 "Palma!" Steal
 Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
 And this — abjure!
 What next? The curtains see
 Dividing! She is there; and presently
 He will be there — the proper You, at
 length —
 In your own cherished dress of grace and
 strength:
 30 Most like, the very Boniface!
 Not so.
 It was a showy man advanced; but though
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every
 sound
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves
 around,
 — "This is not he," Sordello felt; while,
 "Place
 "For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"
 Hollaed the Jongleurs, — "Eglamor,¹
 whose lay
 "Concludes his patron's Court of Love
 to-day!"

¹ A Troubadour.

Obsequious Naddo strung the master's
 lute
 With the new lute-string, "Elys," named
 to suit
 The song: he stealthily at watch, the 40
 while,
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
 Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's
 brain
 Swam; for he knew a sometime deed
 again;
 So, could supply each foolish gap and
 chasm
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
 Mistaking its true version — was the tale
 Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
 If the man dared no further? Has he
 ceased
 And, lo, the people's frank applause half 50
 done,
 Sordello was beside him, had begun
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his
 friend
 The Trouvere) the true lay with the true
 end,
 Taking the other's names and time and
 place
 For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
 After the flying story; word made leap
 Out word, rhyme — rhyme; the lay could
 barely keep
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more
 aghast
 Than some Egyptian from the harassed 60
 bull
 That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing,
 fronted full
 His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the
 tongue,
 And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty
 prong
 Insulted. But the people — but the cries,
 The crowding round, and proffering the
 prize!
 — For he had gained some prize. He
 seemed to shrink
 Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
 One sight withheld him. There sat
 Adelaide,
 Silent; but at her knees the very maid
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich, 70
 The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of
 which,
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek
 as o'er
 She leant, speaking some six words and
 no more.
 He answered something, anything; and
 she
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all.
 Again

Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to
 glare,
 And greater glare, until the intense flare
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from
 his sense.
 And when he woke 'twas many a furlong
 thence,
 At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
 The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
 Was crowned — was crowned! Her
 scented scarf around
 His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps
 the ground?

10 A prize? He turned, and peeringly on
 him

Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
 Ready to talk — "The Jongleurs in a troop
 "Had brought him back, Naddo and
 Squarcialupe

"And Tagliafer; how strange! a child-
 hood spent

"In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!
 "Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead
 with spite,

"And Palma chose him for her minstrel."

Light

Sordello rose — to think, now; hitherto
 He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew

20 Out of it all! Best live from first to last
 The transport o'er again. A week he
 passed,

Sucking the sweet out of each circum-
 stance,

From the bard's outbreak to the luscious
 trance

Bounding his own achievement. Strange!
 A man

Recounted an adventure, but began
 Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
 The frame-work up, sing well what he
 sung ill,

Supply the necessary points, set loose
 As many incidents of little use

30 — More imbecile the other, not to see
 Their relative importance clear as he!

But, for a special pleasure in the act
 Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,
 From Elys, to sing Elys? — from each fit
 Of rapture to contrive a song of it?

True, this snatch or the other seemed to
 wind

Into a treasure, helped himself to find
 A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
 By means of that mere snatch, to many a
 hoard

40 Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
 The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the
 cause

Why such performance should exact ap-
 plause

From men, if they had fancies too? Did
 fate

Decree they found a beauty separate
 In the poor snatch itself? — "Take Elys,
 there,

"— 'Her head that's sharp and perfect like
 a pear,

"So close and smooth are laid the few fine
 locks

"Coloured like honey oozed from topmost
 rocks

"Sun-blanchd the livelong summer' — 50
 if they heard

"Just those two rhymes, assented at my
 word,

"And loved them as I love them who have
 run

"These fingers through those pale locks, let
 the sun

"Into the white cool skin — who first could
 clutch,

"Then praise — I needs must be a god
 to such.

"Or what if some, above themselves, and
 yet

"Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
 "An impress on our gift? So, men be-
 lieve

"And worship what they know not, nor
 receive

"Delight from. Have they fancies — 60
 slow, perchance,

"Not at their beck, which indistinctly
 glance

"Until, by song, each floating part be
 linked

"To each, and all grow palpable, dis-
 tinct!"

He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
 And nearer, while the underwood was
 pushed

Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves
 crushed

At the approach of men. The wind
 seemed laid;

Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
 Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday 70
 yet:

You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
 Flutter — "A Roman bride, when they'd
 dispart

"Her unbound tresses with the Sabine
 dart,

"Holding that famous rape in memory still
 "Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,

"And looked thus," Eglamor would say —
 indeed

'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede
 Home hither in the woods. "Twere
 surely sweet

"Far from the scene of one's forlorn
 defeat

"To sleep!" judged Naddo, who in person 80
 led

Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
 A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
 Old worshippers were something shamed,
 old friends
 Nigh weary; still the death proposed
 amends.
 "Let us but get them safely through my song
 "And home again!" quoth Naddo.
 All along,
 This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
 — This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
 And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
 A ceremony that withdrew the last
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
 Which hid the holy place: should one so frail
 Stand there without such effort? or repine
 If much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
 The power responded, and some sound or sight
 Grew up, his own for ever, to be fixed,
 In rhyme, the beautiful, for ever! — mixed
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
 All pain, remove all trouble; every time
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
 (Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)
 Faltering; so distinct and far above
 Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
 And their arrangement finds enough to do
 For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
 The calling marking him a man apart
 From men — one not to care, take counsel for
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor
 Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,
 Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
 Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth

And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
 So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
 The sorriest bat which cowers throughout noontide
 While other birds are jocund, has one time
 When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime
 Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
 And Eglamor was noblest poet here —
 He well knew, 'mid those April woods he cast
 Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
 That Naddo might suppose him not to think
 Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
 At the one weakness! 'Twas a fervid child,
 That song of his; no brother of the guild
 Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
 The exaltation and the overthrow:
 Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
 His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank
 Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
 And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout
 Like others, not from any zeal to show
 Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
 What else was Eglamor? who, bending down
 As they, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
 Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
 Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
 — In time; for some were watching at the door:
 Who knows what envy may effect? "Give o'er,
 "Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here one spied
 And disengaged the withered crown) —
 "Beside
 "His crown? How prompt and clear
 those verses rang
 "To answer yours! nay, sing them!"
 And he sang
 Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait
 His coming, zealous to congratulate;
 But, to a man — so quickly runs report —
 Could do no less than leave him, and escort
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:
 What must his future life be? was he brought
 So low, who stood so lofty this Spring morn?
 At length he said, "Best sleep now with my scorn,
 "And by to-morrow I devise some plain

"Expedient!" So, he slept, nor woke again.

They found as much, those friends, when they returned

O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned

About Sordello's paradise, his roves

Among the hills and vales and plains and groves,

Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,

Polished by slow degrees, completed last To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanter's now, and, out of breath,

o They lay the beaten man in his abode, Naido reciting that same luckless ode, Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore By means of it, however, one step more In joy; and, mastering the round at length, Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,

When from his covert forth he stood, addressed

Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,

Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,

And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch

o Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,

And laughed as from his brow Sordello took

The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said

It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?) — Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruit-

less fell. A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell¹

Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails

Till evening; evening gives it to her gales To clear away with such forgotten things

As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings

30 Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month came;

"Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May. Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay

Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars

Dug up at Baia, when the south wind shed The ripest, made him happier; filleted

And robbed the same, only a lute beside Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide

10 The country stretched: Goito slept behind — The castle and its covert, which con-

fin'd Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old

To leave the story of his birth untold.

At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow Of his Apollo-life, a certain low And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,

Admonished, no such fortune could be his, All was quite false and sure to fade one day:

The closelier drew he round him his array Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when 50

A reason for his difference from men Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest

While aught of that old life, superbly dressed

Down to its meanest incident, remained A mystery: alas, they soon explained

Away Apollo! and the tale amounts To this: when at Vicenza both her counts

Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin, Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,

Reviled him as he followed; he for spite 60 Must fire their quarter, though that self-

same night Among the flames young Ecelin was born

Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn From the roused populace hard on the

rear, By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear

Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt, Saved her, and died; no creature left

except His child to thank. And when the full

escape Was known — how men impaled from

chine to nape Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned 70

Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,

Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well

Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,

Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —

(For, once this notable discovery made, The past at every point was understood)

— Might harbour easily when times were rude,

When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve 80 That pledge of Agnes Este — loth to leave

Mantua unguarded by a vigilant eye, While there Taurello bode ambiguously —

He who could have no motive now to moil For his own fortunes since their utter

spoil — As it were worth while yet (went the report)

To disengage himself from her. In short, Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just

named His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed

— How shall I phrase it? — Monarch of 90 the World!

For, on the day when that array was furled

For ever, and in place of one a slave

¹ St. Bruno's lily, the *Anthericum Liliastrium*.

To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
In dreams as wild, suppressed — one
daring not

Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
Until a magical equipment, strength,
Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he
chose at length,
Content with unproved wits and failing
frame,

In virtue of his simple will, to claim
That mastery, no less — to do his best
With means so limited, and let the rest
Go by, — the seal was set: never again
Sordello could in his own sight remain
One of the many, one with hopes and cares
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
Only peculiar in a thriveless store
Of fancies, which were fancies and no
more;

Never again for him and for the crowd
A common law was challenged and
allowed

If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
By a mad impulse nothing justified
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his
course

By any known example? Men no more
Compete with him than tree and flower
before.

Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
Acquiring thence his function; he has
gained

The same result with meaner mortals
trained

To strength or beauty, moulded to express
Each the idea that rules him; since no less
He comprehends that function, but can still
Embrace the others, take of might his fill
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
Their qualities, or for a moment fix
On one; abiding free meantime, un-
cramped

By any partial organ, never stamped
Strong, and to strength turning all ener-
gies —

Wise, and restricted to becoming wise —
That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!

"This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
"A soul so various — took no casual
mould

"Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
"Clogged her for ever — soul averse to
change

"As flesh: whereas flesh leaves soul free
to range,

"Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
"Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.

"So, range, free soul! — who, by self-
consciousness,

"The last drop of all beauty dost express —

"The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence 59
"For thee: while for the world, that can
dispense

"Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder
— make

"A shift to love at second-hand, and take
"For idols those who do but idolise,

"Themselves, — the world that counts
men strong or wise,

"Who, themselves, court strength, wisdom,
— it shall bow

"Surely in unexampled worship now,
"Discerning me!" —

(Dear monarch, I beseech,
Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here: discovering this, discover too 64
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it! As 'pigmy natures as you
please —

So much the better for you; take your ease,
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God
alone;

Strange some day with a cross olive-stone!
All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and
thus?)

"The world shall bow to me conceiving all
"Man's life, who see its blisses, great and
small,

"Afar — not tasting any; no machine 70
"To exercise my utmost will is mine:

"Be mine mere consciousness! Let men
perceive

"What I could do, a mastery believe,
"Asserted and established to the throng

"By their selected evidence of song
"Which now shall prove, whate'er they are,
or seek

"To be, I am — whose words, not actions
speak,

"Who change no standards of perfection,
vex

"With no strange forms created to perplex,
"But just perform their bidding and no 80
more,

"At their own satiating-point give o'er,
"While each shall love in me the love that
leads

"His soul to power's perfection." Song,
not deeds,

(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate
would brook

Mankind no other organ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense

His own volition by, receive men's sense
Of its supremacy — would live content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.

Nor should, for instance, strength an 90
outlet seek

And, striving, be admired: nor grace be-
speak

Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes:
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change un-
seemly moods;

But he would give and take on song's one point.
 Like some huge throbbing stone that,
 poised a-joint,
 Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
 Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed
 Thunder, and raves the windstorm: only
 let
 That key by any little noise be set —
 The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to
 scritch
 Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
 10 However loud, however low — all lift
 The groa'ning monster, stricken to the
 heart.
 Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its
 part,
 And this, for his, will hardly interfere!
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
 But wile the hour away — a pastime slight
 Till he shall step upon the platform: right!
 And, now thus much is settled, cast in
 rough,
 Proved feasible, be counselled! thought
 enough, —
 Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:
 20 Were it a less digested plan! how swerve
 To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-
 dried grapes,
 And watch the soaring hawk there! Life
 escapes
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times
 more,
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply
 A famished world.

The evening star was high
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame
 arrived
 Before him: friends applauded, foes con-
 nived,
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
 30 Angels, and all these angels would be blest
 Supremely by a song — the thrice-re-
 nowned
 Goito-manufacture. Then he found
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
 A sore annoyance; 'twas the song's effect
 He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!
 In the past life, what might be singing's
 use?
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
 Praise, not the toilsome process which
 procured
 40 That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams
 abjured,
 No overleaping means for ends — take
 both
 For granted or take neither! I am loth
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors

Go pine; "the master certes meant to
 waste
 "No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
 "He'd please anon: true bard, in short, —
 disturb
 "His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
 "Fancy nor reason, wanting in him;
 whence
 "The staple of his verses, common sense: 50
 "He built on man's broad nature — gift
 of gifts,
 "That power to build! The world con-
 tented shifts
 "With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
 "Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
 "Its poet-soul — that's, after all, a freak
 "(The having eyes to see and tongue to
 speak)
 "With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
 "So plainly incompatible that — yes —
 "Yes — should a son of his improve the
 breed
 "And turn our poet, he were cursed in- 60
 deed!"
 "Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
 "If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
 "Now!" thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!
 You pother with your glossaries to get
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —
 Much as you study arras how to twirl
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl
 Once; but you surely reach, at last, —
 or, no!
 Never quite reach what struck the people 70
 so,
 As from the welter of their time he drew
 Its elements successively to view,
 Followed all actions backward on their
 course,
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,
 Such a strength, such a weakness, added
 then
 A touch or two, and turned them into men.
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
 Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity, 80
 Sinner the other flared portentous by
 A greedy people. Then why stop, sur-
 prised
 At his success? The scheme was realised
 Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as
 loud
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,
 The woman's breath to feel upon his
 sleeve,
 Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he
 less
 "Than Lucio, in your verses? how con-
 fess,
 "It seemed too much but yestereve!" —
 the youth,

Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!

"You love Bianca, surely, from your song:
"I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,

In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,

Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
o From true life, fain-relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures — one
and all

To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain

Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates,
sure,

His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page

He look because, at the first line, a proof
'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern
roof?

o "On! Give yourself, excluding aught
beside,

"To the day's task; compel your slave
provide

"Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
"Thoroughly conned. These lays of
yours, in brief —

"Cannot men bear, now, something better?
— fly

"A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
"Of essences? the period sure has ceased

"For such: present us with ourselves, at
least,

"Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and
hates

"Made flesh: wait not!"

Awile the poet waits
3o However. The first trial was enough:

He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it
writhe

Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light — his Language. How
he sought

The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-
wrought

That Language, — welding words into
the crude

Mass from the new speech round him, till
a rude

Armour was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply

o Melted to make it; — boots not. This
obtained

With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took

An action with its actors, quite forsook

Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result — a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!"

Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he 5o
sought

To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take percep-
tion's place

But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment — of the whole

By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks

The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello,

needing such,
Has rent perception into: it's to clutch
And reconstruct — his office to diffuse, 6o

Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. "For the rest,

"E'en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
"The whole dream, what impertinence in
me

"So to express it, who myself can be
"The dream! nor, on the other hand, are
those

"I sing to, over-likely to suppose
"A higher than the highest I present

"Now, which they praise already: be
content

"Both parties, rather — they with the old 7o
verse,

"And I with the old praise — far go, fare
worse!"

A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, which
rings

Whirled from each delicatest limb it
warps;

So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth¹ have cast his luckless quoits.

He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now
his aim

Merely, — what was it? "Not to play 8o
the fool

"So much as learn our lesson in your
school!"

Replied the world. He found that, every
time

He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognised no jot

As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was
dunce

Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.

¹ Accidentally killed by Apollo whilst playing
quoits, and changed into the flower.

- His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!
 — Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak, Had Montfort at completely (so to speak) His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept: The true need for true merit! — his abates Into a sort he most repudiates, And on them angrily he turns. Who were
 10 The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
 About their recognition, ay or no?
 In spite of the convention months ago, (Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
 This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers With the bright band of old Goito years, As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
 Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
 20 A fairy dust upon that multitude Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
 His giants dignified those puny elves, Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
 Himself still footing a delusive round, Remote as ever from the self-display He meant to compass, hampered every way By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
 Continue, make believe to find in men A use he found not?
 Weeks, months, years went by,
 30 And lo, Sordello vanished utterly, Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
 With each; one jarred against another life;
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man — Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran Here, there: let slip no opportunities As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize To drop on him some no-time and acquit His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit — That waiving any compromise between
 40 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen Beyond most methods) — of incurring scoff
 From the Man-portion — not to be put off With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme, Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered forth in dream,
 Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims, But just his sorrier self? — who yet might be Sorrier for aught he in reality
- Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part,
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art 50
 Developing his soul a thousand ways — Potent, by its assistance, to amaze The multitude with majesties, convince Each sort of nature that the nature's prince Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
 Into a bravest of expedients, too; Apollo, seemed it now, ~~in~~ verse had thrown
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
 To tune a crazy tenzon¹ or sirvent² — 30
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
 Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward! But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard. John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
 That on the sea, with, open in his hand, A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.
 Then, if internal struggles to be one, Which frittered him incessantly piecemeal, Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real 70
 Intruding Mantuans! ever with some call To action while he pondered, once for all, Which looked the easier effort — to pursue This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through
 The present ill-appreciated stage Of self-revelment, and compel the age Know him — or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake Off timid habits of denial, mix With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could 80
 fix
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
 For his perplexity! Thus unprepared, The obvious if not only shelter lay In deeds, the dull conventions of his day Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad
 'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad, Submits to this and that established rule? Let Vidal change, or any other fool, His murrey-coloured³ robe for flamot,⁴ And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it 90
 not,
 Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the heart,

¹ *Tenzon*. A dramatic skirmish in verse before the Court of Love.

² *Sirvent*. Martial, political, and satirical songs. Both Provençal terms.

³ Mulberry-colour.

⁴ The colour of a dead leaf.

His talk! Whatever topics they might start

Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.

Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped

At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
io They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock

Regaled him with, each talker from his stock

Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe ripe, rotten-rich,

Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which

He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;
(For, at conjecture how might words appear

To others, playing there what happened here,

io And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 'twas slipped, the occasion he returned

To seize:) he'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,

Would but a twenty-cubit plectre,¹ reach;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close; each excellency went

For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,

Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust

And more: why move his soul, since move it must

io At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones — at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 'twas spoken; praise and blame

Of what he said grew pretty nigh the same
— Meantime awards to meantime acts:
his soul,

Unequal to the compassing a whole,
io Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive

Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best!

¹ An instrument for twanging the strings of a lyre.

Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried, the proper way.

As Man
So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was — not sink under any rivals; who
Loudly and long enough, without these 50

qualms,
Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked

psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
"As knops² that stud some al mug³ to the pith

"Pricked for gum, wry thence, and crinkled worse

"Than pursed eyelids of a river-horse
"Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze" —

Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these!

But — but —

"Observe a pompion⁴-twine afloat;
"Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!

"Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and 60 root,

"The entire surface of the pool to boot.
"So could I pluck a cup, put in one song

"A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,

"Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.

"How should externals satisfy my soul?"
"Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe"

(Hazarded Naddo) "finds; 'the man can't stoop

"To sing us out,' quoth he, 'a mere romance;

"He'd fain do better than the best, enhance

"The subjects' rarity, work problems out 70
"Therewith.' Now, you're a bard, a bard

past doubt,

"And no philosopher; why introduce
"Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use

"In poetry — which still must be, to strike,
"Based upon common sense; there's

nothing like

"Appealing to our nature! what beside
"Was your first poetry? No tricks were

tried

"In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!
"The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys

and woes:
"We'll trust him.' Would you have your 80 songs endure?

"Build on the human heart! — why, to be sure

² Buds. ³ Sandal-wood. ⁴ Melon.

"Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,
 "Ours, every one's; the healthy heart one cares
 "To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,
 "That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,
 "Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
 "When they have got their calm! And is it true,
 "Fire rangles at the heart of every globe?
 "Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe
 "Too deeply for poetic purposes:
 10 "Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
 "Laugh! what does that prove? — stations you midway
 "And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
 "That's rank injustice done me! I restrict
 "The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
 "Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did
 "I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
 "That sense of power, you have! True bards believe
 "All able to achieve what they achieve —
 "That is, just nothing — in one point abide
 20 "Profounder simpletons than all beside.
 "Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard
 "Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!"
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
 Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe
 What grubs or nips or rubs or rips — your louse
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,¹
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
 By implements it sedulous employs
 30 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-
 toise
 Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
 At once! They settled staunchly; shame ensued:
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
 As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think
 Their thoughts and speak their speech,
 secure to slink
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,
 40 And chew the cud — what he and what his race
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this
 Conformity was partial. He would miss

¹ Minstrel-knight of William the Conqueror.

Some point, brought into contact with them ere
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere
 Of his existence they attended him;
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectified — a grim
 List — slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
 His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
 Nor merely neutralised his waking act
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract
 54 The intermediate will, the choice of means,
 He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
 Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running-o'er
 Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content
 "With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
 And task it duly; by advances slight,
 The simple stuff becoming composite, 6:
 Count Lori grew Apollo: best recall
 His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
 His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
 Gathered his shattered fancies into one,
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone
 Sufficed the grey Paulician; by and by,
 To balance the ethereality,
 Passions were needed; foiled he sank again.
 Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time 70
 explain)
 Because a sudden sickness set it free
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
 Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,
 "Half-crazed I think; what good's the
 Kaiser's gold
 "To such an one? God help me! for I catch
 "My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch —
 "'He bears that double breastplate on,' they say,
 "'So many minutes less than yesterday!' 80
 "Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
 "Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
 "Exact a punishment for many things
 "You know, and some you never knew; which brings
 "To memory, Azze's sister Beatrix
 "And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
 "And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
 "Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf

"Mean to embrace each other." So began
 Romano's missive to his fighting man
 Taurello — on the Tuscan's death, away
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
 Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
 Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza! I
 "Absent, and she selects this time to die!
 "Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!" Half a score
 Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
 Romano in his reeking spurs: too late —
 "Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"
 The chieftain stammered; "let me die in
 peace —
 "Forget me! Was it I who craved increase
 "Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot
 your worst
 "Against the Father: as you found me
 first
 "So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma,
 sure,
 "Is at Goito still. Retain that lure —
 "Only be pacified!"
 The country rung
 20 With such a piece of news: on every
 tongue,
 How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
 Had done a long day's service, so, might
 duff
 The green and yellow, and recover breath
 At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's
 death,
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
 From Otho's house, he carried to reside
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
 A structure worthy her imperial style,
 The gardens raise, the statues there en-
 shrine,
 30 She never lived to see) — although his line
 Was ancient in her archives and she took
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
 Her child when he forsook himself and
 spent
 A prowess on Romano surely meant
 For his own growth — whither he ne'er
 resorts
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
 Were shows to greet him. "Take a
 friend's advice,"
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
 40 "Because your rivals (nothing can abash
 "Some folks) demur that we pronounced
 you best
 "To sound the great man's welcome; 'tis
 a test,
 "Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,
 "The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty
 hint
 "Your pinions have received of late a
 shock —
 "Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver
 flock!
 "Sing well!" A signal wonder, song's no
 whit
 Facilitated.
 Fast the minutes flit;
 Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
 The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing; 50
 So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow,
 alone:
 Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
 Song must be struck. What occupies that
 front?
 Just how he was more awkward than his
 wont
 The night before, when Naddo, who had
 seen
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
 For dignity no crosses could affect —
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect
 A satisfaction if established joys
 Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys 60
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may
 come
 Or keep away! And thus he wandered,
 dumb
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly
 spent,
 On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he
 went,
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
 The moon came out; like features of a face,
 A querulous fraternity of pines,
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovel-
 ling vines
 Also came out, made gradually up
 The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup 70
 And castle. He had dropped through one
 defile
 He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
 Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream,
 enwrapped
 Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they
 lapped,
 Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel
 meant
 To wear his soul away in discontent,
 Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and
 brain
 Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
 As some thin seedling spice-tree starved
 and frail,
 Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail 80
 Crusted into the porphyry pavement
 smooth,
 — Suffered remain just as it sprung, to
 soothe
 The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
 Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret, —
 When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
 And flung into the common court beside
 Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello!
 Soon
 Was he low muttering, beneath the moon

Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, —
Since from the purpose, he maintained
before,

Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin —
trails

Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought
avails

The night as, torch in hand, he must ex-
plore

The maple chamber: did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?

10 Worn now with gaps so large, there blew
cold streams

Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your
ear

Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The
nests

And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-
chests

Empty and smelling of the iris root

The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that
day,

Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

20 The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
Had been at the commencement proved
unfit;

That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
Mankind — no fitter: was the Will itself
In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long
smile,

"I shall be king again!" as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.

Next day, no poet! "Where-
fore?" asked

30 Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs,
masked

As devils, ended; "don't a song come
next?"

The master of the pageant looked perplexed
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.

"His Highness knew what poets were: in
brief,

"Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
"To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,

"One must receive their nature in its
length

"And breadth, expect the weakness with
the strength!"

— So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases
spent,

40 The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his
chin,

And nodded that the bull-bait might
begin.

BOOK THE THIRD.

AND the font took them: let our laurels
lie!

Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, sub-
due

That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict
embrace,

Putting aside the past, shall soon efface 54
Its print as well — factitious humours
grown

Over the true — loves, hatreds not his
own —

And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus,¹ silkiest

Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted
lip,

Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its
pain,

Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening
escapes,

Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar 60
shapes

Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,

Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or
sigh

For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglan-
tines,

The last voice murmurs, 'twixt the blos-
somed vines,

Of Men, of that machine supplied by
thought

To compass self-perception with, he sought
By forcing half himself — an insane pulse

Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse, 70
Never transmute — on human sights and
sounds,

To watch the other half with; irksome
bounds

It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
For ever. Better sure be unrevealed

Than part revealed: Sordello well or ill
Is finished: then what further use of Will,

Point in the prime idea not realised,
An oversight? inordinately prized,

No less, and pampered with enough of each
Delight to prove the whole above its reach. 80

"To need become all natures, yet retain
"The law of my own nature — to remain

"Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chest-
nut, think,

"Should yearn for this first larch-bloom
crisp and pink,

¹ A fine cloth.

“Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs
stanch

“March wounds along the fretted pine-
tree branch!

“Will and the means to show will, great
and small,

“Material, spiritual, — abjure them all
“Save any so distinct, they may be left

“To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus
bereft,

“Just as I first was fashioned would I be!

“Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me

“Thou visitest to comfort and befriend!

30 “Swim thou into my heart, and there an
end,

“Since I possess thee! — nay, thus shut
mine eyes

“And know, quite know, by this heart’s
fall and rise,

“When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and
when

“Out-standest: wherefore practise upon
men

“To make that plainer to myself?”
Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted; or simply notice change in him —

How eyes, once with exploring bright, grew
dim

And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness

Under the imbecility, — nought kept
That down; he slept, but was aware he

slept,
So, frustrated: as who brainsick made
pact

Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain

His own blood’s measured clicking at his
brain.

To finish. One declining Autumn day —
Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,

No wind that cared trouble the tacit
woods —

50 He sauntered home complacently, their
moods

According, his and nature’s. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark

The embers, that the Troubadour, who
sung

Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his
tongue,

Its craft his brain, how either brought to
pass

Singing at all; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo’s now. The year

Began to find its early promise sere
As well. Thus beauty vanishes; thus

stone
40 Outlingers flesh: nature’s and his youth
gone,

They left the world to you, and wished you
joy.

When, stopping his benevolent employ.

A presage shuddered through the welkin;
harsh

The earth’s remonstrance followed. ’Twas
the marsh

Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning’s

face,
And, where the mists broke up immense
and white

’T the steady wind, burned like a wraith of
light

Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.

And here was nature, bound by the same 50
bars

Of fate with him!

“No! youth once gone is gone:
“Deeds, let escape, are never to be done.

“Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year;
for us —

“Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
“My chance? nor two lives wait me, this

to spend,
“Learning save that? Nature has time,
may mend

“Mistake, she knows occasion will recur;
“Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her

“With her magnificent resources? — I
“Must perish once and perish utterly.

60 “Not any strollings now at even-close
“Down the field-path, Sordello! by thorn-
rows

“Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of
fire

“And dew, outlining the black cypress’
spire

“She waits you at, Elys, who heard you
first

“Woo her, the snow-month through, but
ere she durst

“Answer ’twas April. Linden-flower-
time-long

“Her eyes were on the ground; ’tis July,
strong

“Now; and because white dust-clouds
overwhelm

“The woodside, here or by the village elm 70
“That holds the moon, she meets you,

somewhat pale,
“But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil

“And whisper (the damp little hand in
yours)

“Of love, heart’s love, your heart’s love
that endures

“Till death. Tush! No mad mixing
with the rout

“Of haggard ribalds wandering about
“The hot torchlit wine-scented island-
house

“Where Friedrich holds his wickedest
carouse,

“Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,
“Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans 80

“Nuocera holds, — those tall grave daz-
zling Norse,

- "High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed
whiter than the morse,
"Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
"He sent his barks to fetch through icy
seas,
"The blind night seas without a saving star,
"And here in snowy birdskin robes they
are,
"Sordello! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt
"Superb as Byzant domes that devils
built!
"— Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to
go
"Ever like august cheery Dandolo,
10 "Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
"Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and
all,
"Through vanquished Byzant where
friends note for him
"What pillar, marble massive, sardius¹
slim,
"Twere fittest he transport to Venice'
Square —
"Flattered and promised life to touch them
there
"Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!
"No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds,
peaces, wars!
"Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
"Points in the life I waited! what are ye
20 "But roundels of a ladder which appeared
"Awhile the very platform it was reared
"To lift me on? — that happiness I find
"Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
"Instinct which bade forego you all unless
"Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happi-
ness
"Awaited me; the way life should be used
"Was to acquire, and deeds like you con-
ducted
"To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed
"Life's very use, so long! Whatever
seemed
30 "Progress to that, was pleasure; aught
that stayed
"My reaching it — no pleasure. I have
laid
"The ladder down; I climb not; still,
aloft
"The platform stretches! Blissess strong
and soft,
"I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
"Never of what they promised could I get
"A glimpse till now! The common sort,
the crowd,
"Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
"However slight, distinct from what they
See,
"However bounded; Happiness must be,
40 "To feed the first by gleanings from the
last,
"Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
- "Become what they behold; such peace-
in-strife,
"By transmutation, — is the Use of Life,
"The Alien turning Native to the soul
"Or body — which instructs me; I am
whole
"There and demand a Palma; had the
world
"Been from my soul to a like distance
hurled,
"Twere Happiness, to make it one with
me:
"Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
"Include a world, in flesh; I comprehend 50
"In spirit now; and this done, what's to
blend
"With? Nought is Alien in the world —
my Will
"Owns all already; yet can turn it — still
"Less — Native, since my Means to corre-
spond
"With Will are so unworthy, 'twas my
bond
"To tread the very joys that tantalise
"Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
"I die then! Will the rest agree to die?
"Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
"Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue 60
"I miss? — that's underneath my finger
too,
"Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some
yearning traced
"Deeper, some petty consequence em-
braced
"Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then? —
complained
"So much my Will was fettered, yet re-
mained
"Content within a tether half the range
"I could assign it? — able to exchange
"My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
"Idle because I could thus understand —
"Could e'en have penetrated to its core 70
"Our mortal mystery, yet — fool — for-
bore,
"Preferred elaborating in the dark
"My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
"Born of my predecessors, though one
stroke
"Of mine had brought the flame forth!
Mantua's yoke,
"My minstrel's-trade, was to behold man-
kind, —
"My own concern was just to bring my
mind
"Behold, just extricate, for my acquit,
"Each object suffered stifle in the mist
"Which hazard, custom, blindness inter- 80
pose
"Betwixt things and myself."

Whereat he rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward.

¹ Carnelian stone.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
 "Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid
 drops
 "Under a humid finger; while there fleets,
 "Outside the screen, a pageant time re-
 peats
 "Never again! To be deposed, im-
 mured
 "Clandestinely — still petted, still assured
 "To govern were fatiguing work — the
 Sight
 "Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide:
 wreak ere night
 "Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake
 "This thirst somehow, the poorest impress
 take
 "That serves! A blasted bud displays
 you, torn,
 "Faint rudiments of the full flower un-
 born;
 "But who divines what glory coats o'er-
 clasp
 "Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's
 grasp
 "Taurello sent?"
 "Taurello? Palma sent
 "Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing
 leant
 Over the lost bard's shoulder) — "and,
 believe,
 "You cannot more reluctantly receive
 "Than I pronounce her message: we de-
 part
 "Together. What avail a poet's heart
 "Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades
 of grass
 "Suffice him. News? Why, where your
 marish was,
 "On its mud-banks smoke rises after
 smoke
 "I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-
 broke.
 "Oh, the world's tidings! small your
 thanks, I guess,
 "For them. The father of our Patroness,
 "Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
 "Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
 "His wealth and goes into a convent: both
 "Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma
 plighted troth
 "A week since at Verona: and they want
 "You doubtless to contrive the marriage-
 chant
 "Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Then
 was told
 The tale from the beginning — how, made
 bold
 By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had
 burned
 And pillaged till he unawares returned
 To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend
 Were doing their endeavour, how the end
 O' the siege was nigh, and how the Count,
 released

From further care, would with his marriage-
 feast
 Inaugurate a new and better rule,
 Absorbing thus Romano.
 "Shall I schoor
 "My master," added Naddo, "and sug-
 gest
 "How you may clothe in a poetic vest
 "These doings, at Verona? Your re-
 sponse
 "To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart
 at once?'"
 "A good resolve! In truth, I hardly
 hoped
 "So prompt an acquiescence. Have you
 groped
 "Out wisdom in the wilds here? —
 thoughts may be
 "Over-poetical for poetry.
 "Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's
 neck;
 "And yet what spoils an orient like some
 speck
 "Of genuine white, turning its own white
 grey?
 "You take me? Curse the cicala!"
 One more day
 One eve — appears Verona! Many a
 group,
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's
 swoop
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering —
 Christendom
 Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,
 Since Friedrich only waited some event
 Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there,
 wage
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
 His barons from the burghers, and restore
 The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
 By Hildebrand.
 I' the palace, each by each,
 Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
 At first in that dim closet, face with face
 (Despite the tumult in the market-place)
 Exchanging quick low laughter: now
 would rush
 Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —
 But for the most part their two histories
 Ran best thro' the locked fingers and
 linked arms.
 And so the night flew on with its alarms
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
 "Now, Lady!" gasped he. Then arose
 the two
 And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
 A balcony lay black beneath until
 Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired
 men
 Came on it and harangued the people: then

Sea-like that people surging to and fro
 Shouted, "Hale forth the carroch — trum-
 pets, ho,
 "A flourish! Run it in the ancient
 grooves!
 "Back from the bell! Hammer — that
 whom behoves
 "May hear the League is up! Peal —
 learn who list,
 "Verona means not first of towns break
 tryst
 "To-morrow with the League!"
 Enough. Now turn —
 Over the eastern cypresses: discern!
 Is any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang

10 The air with shouts that overpowered the
 clang
 Of the incessant carroch, even: "Haste —
 "The candle's at the gateway! ere it
 waste,
 "Each soldier stand beside it, armed to
 march
 "With 'Tiso Sampier through the eastern
 arch!"
 Ferrara's succoured, Palma!

Once again

They sat together; some strange thing in
 train

To say, so difficult was Palma's place
 In taking, with a coy fastidious grace
 Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.

20 But when she felt she held her friend indeed
 Safe, she threw back her curls, began im-
 plant

Her lessons; telling of another want
 Goito's quiet nourished than his own;
 Palma — to serve him — to be served,
 alone

Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralised
 The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
 If, while Sordello fain had captive led
 Nature, in dream was Palma subjected
 To some out-soul, which dawned not
 though she pined

30 Delaying, till its advent, heart and mind
 Their life. "How dared I let expand the
 force

"Within me, till some out-soul, whose re-
 source

"It grew for, should direct it? Every law
 "Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,

"Must One determine whose corporeal
 shape

"Would be no other than the prime escape
 "And revelation to me of a Will

"Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable

"Above, save at the point which, I should
 know,

40 "Shone that myself, my powers, might
 overflow

"So far, so much; as now it signified

"Which earthly shape it henceforth chose
 my guide,

"Whose mortal lip selected to declare
 "Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
 "— The first of intimations, whom to love;
 "The next, how love him. Seemed that
 orb, above

"The castle-covert and the mountain-
 close,

"Slow in appearing? — if beneath it rose

"Cravings, aversions, — did our green
 precinct

"Take pride in me, at unawares distinct

"With this or that endowment, — how,
 repressed

"At once, such jetting power shrank to the
 rest!

"Was I to have a chance touch spoil me,
 leave

"My spirit thence unfitted to receive

"The consummating spell? — that spell
 so near

"Moreover! 'Waits he not the waking
 year?

"His almond-blossoms must be honey-
 ripe

"By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels
 stripe

"The thawed ravines; because of him,
 the wind

"Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
 "Him now!"

"And chief, that earnest April morn
 "Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so
 worn

"And white my cheek, so idly my blood
 beat,

"Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
 "And saying as she prompted; till out-
 burst

"One face from all the faces. Not then
 first

"I knew it; where in maple chamber
 glooms,

"Crowned with what sanguine-heart
 pomegranate blooms,

"Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledg-
 ment

"Sanctioned my own: 'twas taken, Pal-
 ma's bent, —

"Sordello, — recognised, accepted.
 "Dumb

"Sat she still scheming. Ecelin would
 coine

"Gaunt, scared, 'Cesano baffles me,' he'd
 say:

"'Better I fought it out, my father's way!
 "Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,

"And you and your Taurello yonder! —
 what's

"'Romano's business there?' An hour's
 concern

"To cure the froward Chief! — induce re-
 turn

"As heartened from those overmeaning
 eyes

"Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise
 "Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
 "Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit
 "And scheme against the next emergence,
 I —
 "To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
 "Or fold the wing — to con your horo-
 scope
 "For leave command those steely shafts
 shoot ope,
 "Or straight assuage their blinding eager-
 ness
 "In blank smooth snow. What semblance
 of success
 "To any of my plans for making you
 "Mine and Romano's? Break the first
 wall through,
 "Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, sup-
 plant
 "His sons beside, still, vainest were the
 vaunt:
 "There, Salinguerra would obstruct me
 sheer,
 "And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
 "Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady
 died
 "In her lone chamber: only I beside:
 "Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
 "At Padra, Ecelin away in ire
 "With Alberic. She held me thus — a
 clutch
 "To make our spirits as our bodies touch —
 "And so began flinging the past up, heaps
 "Of uncouth treasure from their sunless
 sleeps
 "Within her soul; deeds rose along with
 dreams,
 "Fragments of many miserable schemes,
 "Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the
 last
 "Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the
 past,
 "How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up
 her face,
 "All left of it, into one arch-grimace
 "To die with . . .
 "Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear
 "Of that fell laughing, heard as now I
 hear.
 "Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart
 grow weak
 "When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to
 speak
 "— Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark! —
 for in
 "Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
 "(How summoned, who divines?) — look-
 ing as if
 "He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
 "Already in my arms; for 'Girl, how must
 "I manage Este in the matter thrust
 "Upon me, how unravel your bad coil?
 "Since' (he declared) 'tis on your brow
 — a soil
 "Like hers there!' then in the same breath,
 'he lacked
 "No counsel after all, had signed no pact
 "With devils, nor was treason here or
 there,
 "Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
 "He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
 "Would begin life afresh, now, — would
 not slave
 "For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
 "What bootied him to meddle or to make
 "In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew 5
 "The meaning of his promise to undo
 "All she had done — why marriages were
 made,
 "New friendships entered on, old followers
 paid
 "With curses for their pains, — new
 friends' amaze
 "At height, when, passing out by Gate
 Saint Blaise,
 "He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his
 head
 "Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he
 said,
 "Long since, nigh thirty years, because
 his wife
 "And child were saved there, to bestow
 his life
 "On God, his gettings on the Church.' 60
 "Exiled
 "Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
 "My days and nights; 'twas found, the orb
 I sought
 "To serve, those glimpses came of Fomal-
 haut,
 "No other: but how serve it? — authorise
 "Yqu and Romano mingle destinies?
 "And straight Romano's angel stood beside
 "Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
 "For Salinguerra 'twas, with neck low
 bent,
 "And voice lightened to music, (as he
 meant
 "To learn, not teach me,) who withdrew 70
 the pall
 "From the dead past and straight revived
 it all,
 "Making me see how first Romano waxed,
 "Wherefore he waned now, why, if I re-
 laxed
 "My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing
 effete,
 "Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
 "Its course, and counting every step astray
 "A gain so much. Romano, every way
 "Stable, a Lombard House now — why
 start back
 "Into the very outset of its track?
 "This patching principle which late allied 80
 "Our House with other Houses — what
 beside
 "Concerned the apparition, the first
 Knight

- "Who followed Conrad hither in such
plight
"His utmost wealth was summed in his
one steed?
"For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
"A task, in the beginning hazardous
"To him as ever task can be to us;
"But did the weather-beaten thief despair
"When first our crystal cincture of warm
air
"That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-
belt
"(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus
dwelt, —
10 "Furtive he pierced, and Este was to
face —
"Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard
grace?
"Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
"Maturing what already was mature?
"No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Con-
front
"Este, inspect yourself. What's nature?
Wont.
"Discard three-parts your nature, and
adopt
"The rest as an advantage!' Old strength
propped
"The man who first grew Podestà among
"The Vicentines, no less than, while there
sprung
20 "His palace up in Padua like a threat,
"Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed
yet
"In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object
gained,
"Romano was established — has re-
mained —
"For are you not Italian, truly peers?
"With Este? *Azzo* better soothes our
ears
"Than *Alberic*? or is this lion's-crime
"From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of
mine)
"So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?
"(Thus went he on with something of a
mock)
30 "Wherefore recoil, then, from the very
fate
"Conceded you, refuse to imitate
"Your model farther? Este long since
left
"Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,
"Este required the Pope to further him:
"And you, the Kaiser — whom your
father's whim
"Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
"If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
"Commenced, but Ecelin desists from:
just
"As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
40 "Her donative, — her Piedmont given
the Pope,
"Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
"Twixt France and Italy, — to the su-
perb
"Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught
curb
"Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
"Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
"With passage here from Germany, —
shall you
"Take it, — my slender plodding talent,
too!
"— Urged me Taurello with his half-
smile.
"He
"As Patron of the scattered family
"Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in
bruit
"Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
"Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
"Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but
wait
"Some rash procedure: Palma was the
link,
"As Agnes' child, between us, and they
shrink
"From losing Palma: judge if we ad-
vance,
"Your father's method, your inheritance!
"The day I was betrothed to Boniface
"At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
"The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
6 "The day I sought Verona with the train
"Agreed for, — by Taurello's policy
"Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
"Were present to annul or to confirm, —
"Richard, whose patience had outstayed
its term,
"Quitted Verona for the siege.
"And now
"What glory may engird Sordello's brow?
"Through this? A month since at Oliero
slunk
"All that was Ecelin into a monk;
"But how could Salinguerra so forget
7 "His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
"One effort to recover him? He sent
"Forthwith the tidings of this last event
"To Ecelin — declared that he, despite
"The recent folly, recognised his right
"To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring
"Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
"This chance away? Or were his sons
now Head
"O' the House?' Through me Tau-
rello's missive sped;
"My father's answer will by me return. 8
"Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more
concern
"With strife than, for his children, with
fresh plots
"Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he
blots
"For aye: Taurello shall no more sub-
serve,
"Nor Ecelin impse.' Lest this unnerve

"Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
 "Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,
 "I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
 "Este, forsake Romano as the frith
 "Its mainsea for that firmiland, sea makes
 head
 "Against I stand, Romano, — in their
 stead
 "Assume the station they desert, and give
 "Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
 "Taurello licence he demands. Mid-
 night —
 "Morning — by noon to-morrow, making
 light
 "Of the League's issue, we, in some gay
 weed
 "Like yours, disguised together, may pre-
 ceede
 "The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach
 "Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
 "The rest! Then say if I have miscon-
 ceived
 "Your destiny, too readily believed
 "The Kaiser's cause your own!"
 And Palma's fled.
 Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lom-
 bardy,
 Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
 Though he should live — a centre of dis-
 gust
 Even — apart, core of the outward crust
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one
 round
 Of life was quite accomplished; and he
 found
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
 Is insufficient to its own delight,
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill
 By means of such to body forth its Will —
 And, after, insufficient to apprise
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognise
 The Hid by the Revealed — but that, —
 the last
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast, —
 Will, he bade abdicate, which would not
 void
 The throne, might sit there, suffer he en-
 joyed
 Mankind, a varied and divine array
 Incapable of homage, the first way,
 Nor fit to render incidentally
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
 In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
 The ignominious exile of mankind —
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact
 As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)

Was to secure — if the true diadem
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello
 drank
 The wisdom of that golden Palma, —
 thank
 Verona's Lady in her citadel
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:
 And truly when she left him, the sun reared
 A head like the first clamberer's who peered
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius
 came.
 Nor slight too much my rhymes — that
 spring, disspread,
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead 66
 Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
 My transcendental platan! mounting gay
 (An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
 With tremulous silvered trunk, whence
 branches sheen
 Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver
 soon
 With coloured buds, then glowing like the
 moon
 One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst,
 and all
 Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
 Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-
 dust,
 Ending the weird work prosecuted just 70
 For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
 Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark
 Apart —
 Yet not so, surely never so
 Only, as good my soul were suffered go
 O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside —
 Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
 Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
 For myriad ages as we men compute,
 Returning into it without a break
 O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I 80
 awake
 O'er the lagune, being at Venice.
 Note,
 In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
 With heart and soul and strength, for he
 believed
 Himself achieving all to be achieved
 By singer — in such songs you find alone
 Completeness, judge the song and singer
 one,
 And either purpose answered, his in it
 Or its in him: while from true works (to
 wit
 Sordello's dream-performances that will
 Never be more than dreamed) escapes 90
 there still
 Some proof, the singer's proper life was
 'neath
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
 To that; a passion and a knowledge far
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,

Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you
owed

To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed
divine

In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters) — what may
lurk

in that? "My life commenced before this
work,"

(So I interpret the significance

10 Of the bard's start aside and look askance)

"My life continues after: on I fare

'With no more stopping, possibly, no care

"To note the undercurrent, the why and
how,

"Where, when, o' the deeper life, as thus
just now.

"But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas

"For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come
to pass

"We read that story? How will he com-
press

"The future gains, his life's true business,

"Into the better lay which — that one
flout,

20 "Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out —

"Engrosses him already, though pro-
fessed

"To meditate with us eternal rest,

"And partnership in all his life has
found?"

'Tis but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:

"Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be
moored

"For once, the awning stretched, the poles
assured!

"Noontide above; except the wave's crisp
dash,

"Or buzz of colibri,¹ or tortoise' splash,

"The margin's silent: out with every spoil

30 "Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,

"This serpent of a river to his head

"I the midst! Admire each treasure, as
we spread

"The bank, to help us tell our history

"Aright: give ear, endeavour to descry

"The groves of giant rushes, how they grew

"Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed
through,

"What mountains yawned, forests to give
us vent

"Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went

"Till . . . may that beetle (shake your
cap) attest

40 "The springing of a land-wind from the
West!"

— Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-
day!

To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away

¹ Humming-birds.

Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you
Part company: no other may pursue
Eastward your voyage, be informed what
fate

Intends, if triumph or decline await

The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

I muse this on a ruined palace-step

At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit

Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit

England gave birth to? Who's adorable

Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will
Alack! — be queen to me? That Bas-
sanese

Busied among her smoking fruit-boats?
These

Perhaps from our delicious Asolo

Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico

Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves

To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping
leaves

Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah,
beneath

The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek!
Her wreath

Endures a month — a half-month — if I
make

A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl

Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-
weed

Drifting has sucked down three, four, all
indeed

Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue tur-
banned post

For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost
That pluck at me and point, are you ad-
vised

I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her
disguised

— Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet
like

Their native field-buds and the green
wheat-spike,

So fair! — who left this end of June's
turmoil,

Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free

In dream, came join the peasants o'er the
sea.)

Look they too happy, too tricked out?
Confess

There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear
wretch,

One labours ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children,
both

May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!
Divide the robe yet farther: be content

With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy
wights,

Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
 For, these in evidence, you clearer claim
 A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same
 As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
 And health for each of you, not more — at length
 Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
 Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
 And all be dizenod out as chiefs and bards.
 But in this magic weather one discards
 Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
 Of Life — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:
 'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life — as good you sought
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
 Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
 As hinder Life the evil with the good
 Which make up Living, rightly understood.
 Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
 Take them, made happy by whatever means,
 Parade them for the common credit, vouch
 That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
 In corners out of sight, was just as framed
 For happiness, its portion might have claimed
 As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
 Fastuous as any! — such my project, balked
 Already; I hardly venture to adjust
 The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
 Me! — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
 Inveterately tear-shot: there, be wise,
 Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant
 You insult! — shall your friend (not slave)
 be shent
 For speaking home? Beside, care-bit erased
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
 supremely; and I love you more, far more
 Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.
 Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
 A whisper came, "Let others seek! — thy care
 'Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
 'Should be thy mistress, and into one face
 'The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I,
 judge,

Or no, your secret? Rough apparel — grudge
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
 Alone (that's saddest, but it must be so)
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance
 aside,
 Aught desultory or undignified, —
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass 50
 Or not each formidable group, the mass
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
 Come timid up to me for alms? And then
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do
 Some unexampled grace! — when, whom
 but you
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
 Further before you say, it is to sneer
 I call you ravishing; for I regret 60
 Little that she, whose early foot was set
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
 Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
 Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
 Such sad chance should produce in thee
 such change,
 My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet
 God spoke
 Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our
 yoke,
 Sordello, as your poetship may find! 70
 So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate
 Your old worth; ask moreover, when they
 prate
 Of evil men past hope, "Don't each con-
 trive,
 "Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —
 "Keeping, each losel, through a maze of
 lies,
 "His own conceit of truth? to which he
 hies
 "By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
 "But to himself not inaccessible;
 "He sees truth, and his lies are for the 80
 crowd
 "Who cannot see; some fancied right
 allowed
 "His vilest wrong, empowered the losel
 clutch
 "One pleasure from a multitude of such
 "Denied him." Then assert, "All men
 appear
 "To think all better than themselves, by
 here
 "Trusting a crowd they wrong; but
 really," say,
 "All men think all men stupider than
 they,

"Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
 'The complicated scheme to make amends
 "— Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,
 "Good labours to exist." A slight advance, —
 Merely to find the sickness you die through,
 And nought beside! but if one can't eschew
 One's portion in the common lot, at least
 One can avoid an ignorance increased
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
 10 How nought were like dispensing without stint
 The water of life — so easy to dispense
 Beside, when one has probed the centre whence
 Commotion's born — could tell you of it all!
 "— Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
 "O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!"
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
 Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
 The Horrid,¹ getting neither out nor in,
 A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
 20 Our throats, — each dromedary lolls a tongue,
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
 — Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
 With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!
 While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
 The rock, though he forego his Promised Land
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
 Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,
 30 Mark ye the dim first ooziings? Meribah!²
 Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
 Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .
 "Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You, not I
 'Tis brother, marvel at and magnify
 Such office: "office," quotha? can we get
 To the beginning of the office yet?
 What do we here? simply experiment
 Each on the other's power and its intent
 When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine
 were trucked
 40 For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,

In short, an engine: with a finished one,
 What it can do, is all, — nought, how 'tis done.
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
 A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk
 Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;
 Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's
 Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
 Make out each other more or less precise —
 The scope of the whole engine's to be proved;
 We die; which means to say, the whole's
 removed,
 Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
 A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
 Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.
 And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
 How 'tis done — all that must amuse us yet
 So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
 Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
 60 I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
 So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
 At present, and a weary while to come,
 The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,
 And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,
 For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
 For the better, what it was they saw; the best
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
 "So that I glance," says such an one,
 "around,
 "And there's no face but I can read profound
 "Disclosures in; this stands for hope,
 that — fear,
 "And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!
 "Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
 "O'erarch, will blind thee! Said I not?
 She shuts
 "Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!
 "Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
 "Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
 "Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
 "Thy sweet shape, Zanze! Therefore stoop!"

¹ Isaiah xiii. 21, 22.² Waters of Meribah, that is, of Strife. See Exodus xvii. 7.

"That's truth!"
 "(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth
 "Would say that!"
 "Youth? Plara the bard? Set down
 "That Plara spent his youth in a grim
 town
 "Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
 "The minster for protection, never out
 "Of its black belfry's shade and its bell's
 roar.
 "The brighter shone the suburb, — all the
 more
 "Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
 "Of any chance escape of joy, — some
 roof,
 "Taller than they, allowed the rest de-
 tect, —
 "Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
 "Who could, 'twas meant for laughter,
 that ploughed cheek's
 "Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped
 both peaks
 "Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
 "Then sank, a huge flame on its socket
 edge,
 "With leavings on the grey glass oriel pane
 "Ghastly some minutes more. No fear
 of rain —
 "The minster minded that! in heaps the
 dust
 "Lay everywhere. This town, the min-
 ster's trust,
 "Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
 "In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy
 vale."
 "Exact the town, the minster and the
 street!"
 "As all mirth triumphs, sadness means
 defeat:
 "Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's tri-
 umphed o'er
 "And sad: but Lucio's sad. I said before,
 "Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves
 may be
 "As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
 "Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the
 springe:
 "Tis of the mood itself I speak, what
 tinge
 "Determines it, else colourless, — or
 mirth,
 "Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth."
 "Ay, that's the variation's gist!"
 "Indeed?"
 "Thus far advanced in safety then, pro-
 ceed!
 "And having seen too what I saw, be bold
 "And next encounter what I do behold
 "(That's sure) but bid you take on trust!"
 Attack
 The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,
 Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
 On Salinguerras praise in preference

To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
 Who, seeing just as little as you please,
 Yet turn that little to account, — engage
 With, do not gaze at, — carry on, a stage,
 The work o' the world, not merely make
 report
 The work existed ere their day! In short,
 When at some future no-time a brave band
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my
 hand
 In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile
 where's the hurt
 Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert, 5a
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast
 As though heaven's bounteous windows
 were slammed fast
 Incontinent? Whereas all you, beneath,
 Should scowl at, bruise their lips and
 break their teeth
 Who ply the pullics, for neglecting you:
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew
 A Man, and give him to be turned and
 tried,
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your
 side,
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
 Try them upon Sordello when full-grown, 6a
 And then — ah then! If Hercules first
 parched
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
 What chance have I? The demigod was
 mute
 Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets
 twined
 His forehead long enough, and he began
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
 Take not affront, my gentle audience!
 whom
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb, 7a
 Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet
 rend —
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, my
 patron-friend,
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent
 on
 Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —
 You who, Plataea and Salamis being scant,
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —
 And did well, I acknowledged, as he
 loomed
 Over the midland sea last month, presumed
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
 At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets 8a
 pressed
 Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend,
 wear
 A crest proud as desert while I declare
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
 Tears of its colour from that painted king¹
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile which
 went

¹ Polycrates of Samos.

To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and
fret!

My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind
To come at times and keep my pact in
mind,

Renewed me, — hear no crickets in the
hedge,

Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge

10 At home, and may the summer showers
gush

Without a warning from the missel thrush!
So, to our business, now — the fate of such
As find our common nature — overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it —
Cling when they would discard it; craving
strength

To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap, — flounder on without a
term,

Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a
germ

20 In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
But that's the story — dull enough, confess!

There might be fitter subjects to allure;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:
What seems a fiend perchance may prove
a saint.

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.

John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock

20 Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would
grieve,

He knew: a touching spectacle, that house
In motion to receive him! Xanthus'
spouse

You missed, made panther's meat a month
since; but

Xanthus himself (his nephew 'twas, they
shut

'Twixt boards and sawed asunder)
Polycarp,

Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could
warp

To swear by Caesar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the grey disciple
pressed,

30 Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman
cropped

Soon after, reached the portal. On its
hinge

The door turns and he enters: what quick
twinge

Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes
fix

Whereon, why like some spectral candle-
stick's

Branch the disciple's arms? Dead
swooned he, woke

Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp,
heart-broke,

"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I
toiled

"To no more purpose? Is the gospel
foiled

"Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' 5
hearth,

"Portrayed with sooty garb and features
swarth —

"Ah, Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
"To see the — the — the Devil domi-
ciled?"

Where to sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 'tis
yourself

"Installed, a limning which our utmost
pelf

"Went to procure against to-morrow's
loss;

"And that's no twy-prong, but a pastoral
cross,

"You're painted with!"

His puckered brows unfold —
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case; 60

The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their
arms

A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for — one discovering that
to twist

Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage — one, how
best

He'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike — each party too intent

For noticing, howe'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to 70
kiss.

"May Boniface be duly damned for this!"
— Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he

turned,

From the wet heap of rubbish where they
burned

His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth:
"A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra

seethe

"In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
"Be there to laugh at him!" — moaned

some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed
fast

To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed. 80

The thoroughfares were overrun with weed

—Docks, quitchgrass, loathy mallows no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy
down

To treat for Richard's ransom: here you
saw

The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
To mend the ramparts: sure the laggards
know

The Pope's as good as here! They paced
the streets

More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
"The League," announced a pursuivant,
—"will match

"Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch
"At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
"On pressing matters from his post at
Trent,

"With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply
waits

"Their going to receive the delegates."
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a
glance,

And, keeping the main way, admired
askance

The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of
earth —

Arbalist, manganel¹ and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. "This,
at least

"Were better spared; he scarce presumes
gainsay

"The League's decision! Get our friend
away

"And profit for the future: how else teach
"Fools 'tis not safe to stray within claw's
reach

"Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
"Those mere convulsive scratches find the
bone.

"Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's
nare²?"

The carrochs³ halted in the public
square.

Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier than the crested
gaunt

White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her
beak

Was missing, and whoever chose might
speak

"Ecelin" boldly out: so, — "Ecelin
"Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
"And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,
"He styles his son, dwindles away, no
help

"From conserves, your fine triple-curved
froth

"Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-
broth —

"Eh? Jubilate!" — "Peace! no little
word

"You utter here that's not distinctly heard 54
"Up at Oliero: he was absent sick

"When we besieged Bassano — who, if
the thick

"O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo
made,

"Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
"She managed it so well that, night by
night

"At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-
sprite,

"First fresh, pale by-and-by without a
wound,

"And, when it came with eyes filmed as in
swoond,

"They knew the place was taken." —
"Ominous

"That Ghibellins should get what caute- 60
lous

"Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to
wrench

"Vainly; Saint George contrived his
town a trench

"O' the marshes, an impermeable bar."
"— Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar

"Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
"His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion."

What now? — "The founts! God's
bread, touch not a plank!

"A crawling hell of carrion — every tank
"Choke-full! — found out just now to
Cino's cost —

"The same who gave Taurello up for lost, 70
"And, making no account of fortune's
freaks,

"Refused to budge from Padua then, but
sneaks

"Back now with Concorezzi: 'faith! they
drag

"Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the
flag

"On his own palace, so adroitly razed
"He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk
gazed

"And laughed apart; Cino disliked their
air —

"Must pluck up spirit, show he does not
care —

"Seats himself on the tank's edge — will
begin

"To hum, *sa, sa, Cavalier Ecelin* —

¹ Engine for throwing stones.

² Nostril.

³ Cars of state.

- "A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to
 chime,
 "Now both feet plough the ground, deeper
 each time,
 "At last, *za, za,* and up with a fierce kick
 "Comes his own mother's face caught by
 the thick
 "Grey hair about his spur!"*
 Which means, they lift
 The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
 To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
 Further disclosures; leave them thus
 employed.
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears
 apace,
 10 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-
 wall
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long
 and short;
 Each grew as it contrived, the poplar
 ramped,
 The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and
 cramped,
 Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence,
 on the edge,
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth
 one ledge
 Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and
 woof,
 20 Which smothered up that variance. Scale
 the roof
 Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but
 trees
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
 Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
 Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright
 spirt
 Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
 With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
 30 Your path along a wondrous avenue
 Those walls about on, heaped of gleamy
 stone,
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
 From many a Moorish summer: how they
 wind
 Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
 The building than those rusted cramps
 which drop
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
 You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the
 pride
 Or else despair of the whole country-side!
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with
 wasps,
 40 God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek
 rough-rasps
 In crumbling Naples marble — meant to
 look
- Like those Messina marbles Constance
 took
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide, —
 A certain font with caryatides
 Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
 Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
 Able to right themselves — who see you,
 stoop
 Their arms o' the instant after you! Un-
 plucked
 By this or that, you pass; for they conduct
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver
 mien
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
 No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-
 while,
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous
 blood
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and
 stir
 Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
 60 At the announcement of his over-match
 To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
 The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one
 heap,
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth,
 watched leap
 Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
 Clove dizzily the solid of the war
 — Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
 We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
 San Pietro Palace stops us.
 Such the state
 Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
 70 Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life
 In her new home: whereat enlarged so
 much
 Neighbours upon the novel princely touch
 He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for
 grace;
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth
 Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
 Of the door-pillar.
 He had really left.
 Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
 80 From the morass) where Este's camp was
 made;
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's caval-
 cade —
 All had been seen by him, but scarce as
 when, —
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
 At every point save the fantastic tie
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry, —
 He made account of such. A crowd, — he
 meant
 To task the whole of it; each part's intent

Concerned him therefore: and, the more
 he pried,
 The less became Sordello satisfied
 With his own figure at the moment.
 Sought
 He respite from his task? Descried he
 aught
 Novel in the anticipated sight
 Of all these livers upon all delight?
 This phalanx, as of myriad points com-
 bined,
 Whereby he still had imaged the mankind
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
 His age — in plans to prove at least such
 thing
 Had been so dreamed, — which now he
 must impress
 With his own will, effect a happiness
 By theirs, — supply a body to his soul
 Thence, and become eventually whole
 With them as he had hoped to be without —
 Made these the mankind he once raved
 about?
 Because a few of them were notable,
 Should all be figured worthy note? As
 well
 Expect to find Taurello's triple line
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
 Real pines rose here and there; but, close
 among,
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a
 throng
 Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common
 sort
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
 And hurried into corners, or at best
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs —
 how few!
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
 More left behind and most who should
 succeed, —
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —
 Mingled with, and made veritably great
 Those chiefs: he overlooked not Main-
 ard's state
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
 Of stopping there, each dwindled to be
 head
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
 Or Paduans; startling all the more, that
 these
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared
 for,
 Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)
 Smiling; for if a wealthy man decays
 And out of store of robes must wear, all
 days,
 One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
 'Tis commonly some tarnished gay brocade
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store

Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
 For common wear as she goes through the
 world,
 The faint remainder of some worn-out
 smile
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely. 5
 While
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello
 thus, —
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one
 employed
 In envying them, — or, if they aught en-
 joyed,
 Where lingered something indefinable
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
 Of the result, their good or bad estate) —
 Old memories returned with new effect:
 And the new body, ere he could suspect, 60
 Cohered, mankind and he were really
 fused,
 The new self seemed impatient to be used
 By him, but utterly another way
 Than that anticipated: strange to say,
 They were too much below him, more in
 thrall
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
 What bootied scattered units? — here a
 mind
 And there, which might repay his own to
 find,
 And stamp, and use? — a few, how'er
 august,
 If all the rest were grovelling in the dust? 70
 No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
 Should he establish, privilege procure
 For all, the few had long possessed! He
 felt
 An error, an exceeding error melt:
 While he was occupied with Mantuan
 chants,
 Behoved him think of men, and take their
 wants,
 Such as he now distinguished every side,
 As his own want which might be satis-
 fied, —
 And, after that, think of rare qualities
 Of his own soul demanding exercise. 80
 It followed naturally, through no claim
 On their part, which made virtue of the
 aim
 At serving them, on his, — that, past
 retrieve,
 He felt now in their toils, theirs — nor
 could leave
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)
 Had never even entertained the thought
 That this his last arrangement might be
 fraught
 With incidental good to them as well,
 And that mankind's delight would help to 90
 swell

His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'Twas deeper now, — for could the
crowds repeat

Their poor experiences? His hand that
shook

Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate,
look!

"With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs
on a thread,

"Faint-blue and loosely floating in his
head,

"Large tongue, moist open mouth; and
this long while

"That owner of the idiotic smile

10 "Serves them!"

He fortunately saw in time
His fault however, and since the office
prime

Includes the secondary — best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy?

Ask

The people's friends: for there must be
one good,

One way to it — the Cause! He under-
stood

20 The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Gueifs and Ghibellins, the Lombard
hope

And Rome's despair? — 'twixt Emperor
and Pope

The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —
Hardihood still recurring, still to fail —
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity:

Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the
calms

30 Of paradise; or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the
ground,

Whose heavy length breaks in the noon
profound

Some saving tree — which needs the
Kaiser, dressed

As the dislodging angel of that pest:
Yet flames that pest bedropped, flat head,
full fold,

With coruscating dower of dyes. "Be-
hold

"The secret, so to speak, and master-
spring

"O' the contest! — which of the two
Powers shall bring

40 "Men good, perchance the most good: ay,
it may

"Be that! — the question, which best
knows the way."

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted
past

Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving
man —

Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. "This way of theirs may, —
who can tell? —

"Need perfecting," said he: "let all be
solved

"At once! Taurello 'tis, the task de-
volved

"On late: confront Taurello!"

And at last

He did confront him. Scarce an hour
had past

When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off,
blind, mute

And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara — not the empty town
That morning witnessed: he went up and
down

Streets whence the veil had been stript
shred by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their
dead

Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Townfolk make shift to crawl forth, sit
like friends

With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his
throat

Was clasped with; but an archer knew the
coat —

Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade
beware

One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid
his knife.

Night set in early, autumn dews were
rife,

They kindled great fire while the Leaguer's
mass

Began at every carroch: he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently

The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent

Over its fire, when voices violent
Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was
like

"That struck me from the porch: I did
not strike

"Again: I too have chestnut hair; my kin
"Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.

"Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away!
Sing! Take

"My glove for guerdon!" And for that
man's sake

He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!" —
scarce named,

When, "Our Sordello's rather!" — all exclaimed;
 "Is not Sordello famous for rhyme?"
 He had been happy to deny, this time, —
 Profess as heretofore the aching head
 And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,
 So his intolerable risk might shift
 Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close —
 "I made that," said he to a youth who rose
 As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band
 Conducted him in silence by her hand.
 Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
 Gave place to Palma and her friend, who went
 In turn at Montelungo's visit: one
 After the other were they come and gone, —
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
 This incarnation of the People's hope,
 Sordello, — all the say of each was said;
 And Salinguerra sat, — himself instead
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
 'Twas a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set
 In order for the morning's use; full face,
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
 The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked
 With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
 Romano's green and yellow either side;
 But the new token Tito brought had tried
 The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do
 Until the sight of her restored his lip
 A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship
 Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
 Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject,
 Though time 'twas now if ever, to pause — fix
 On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
 Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down —

His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post
 His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
 Him not before. And now with this strange luck
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
 So well, what thought he of? — how the success
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would 5
 either hush
 Old Feelin's scrupics, bring the manly flush
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt?
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
 Servant — himself the first! Could he contrast
 The whole! — that minstrel's thirty years just spent
 In doing nought, their notablest event
 This morning's journey hither, as I told —
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
 A stammering awkward man that scarce 60
 dared raise
 His eye before the magisterial gaze —
 And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
 Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say
 'Twas a youth nonchalantly looked away
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
 Expostulating trees — so agile, quick
 And graceful turned the head on the broad chest
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire 70
 Across the room; and, loosened of its tire
 Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown
 Large massive locks discoloured as if a crown
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet¹ where
 A sharp white line divided clean the hair;
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
 Mused of, turned over books about. 80
 Square-faced,
 No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased
 In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.

¹ Light helmet.

Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed

A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train

As now a period was fulfilled again:
Of such, a series made his life, compressed
In each, one story serving for the rest —
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last

o At the barrier, whence, were it once over-
past,

They would emerge, a river to the end, —
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade
fate befriend,

Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,

Then fell back to oblivion infinite:

Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched
garden-grounds

Where late the adversary, breaking
bounds,

Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay

20 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldrick; while, — another thing that
marred

Alike emprise, achievement and reward, —
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts
pursue?

As his, few names in Mantua half so old;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adclardi spared

No pains to rival them: both factions
shared

Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould
yield

30 A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and
Gulf

As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi) — never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's
child

Would pass, — could Blacks and Whites
be reconciled

And young Taurello wed Linguetta, —
wealth

And away to a sole grasp. Each treats by
stealth

Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese

40 Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first
dismay

Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay

The after indignation, Boniface,

This Richard's father. "Learn the full
disgrace

"Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who
rate

"Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
"That might have been, 'mongst Este's
valvassors —

"Ay, Azzo's — who, not privy to, abhors
"Our step; but we were zealous." Azzo
then

To do with! Straight a meeting of old 5
men:

"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,

"What if we change our ruler and decoy

"The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere

"With Italy to build in, fix him here,

"Settle the city's troubles in a trice?

"For private wrong, let public good
suffice!"

In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest
friends

Talked of the townsmen making him
amends,

Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there
was

Rare sport, one morning, over the green 60
grass

A mile or so. He sauntered through the
plain,

Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again

In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;

Count Boniface rode smirking at their
side;

"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers
flew,

"And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"

Anon the stripling was in Sicily
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Con-
stance; he

Was gracious nor his guest incapable;
Each understood the other. So it fell, 70

One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at
ease,

Had near forgotten by what precise de-
grees

He crept at first to such a downy seat,
The Count trudged over in a special heat

To bid him of God's love dislodge from
each

Of Salinguerra's palaces, — a breach
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,

For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft

on chin,
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin, 8

Pistore, and the like! Next news, — no
whit

Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band

Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and surround,

Build up and bury in. A last news
crowned

The consternation. since his infant's
birth,

He only waits they end his wondrous girth

Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
Taurello thither, what could be their end
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread

From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled

10 Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph
yelled

Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:

— Not how he bore the blow, retained his
hold,

Got friends safe through, left enemies the
worst

O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at
first:

But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!

Though Azzo simply gained by the event

20 A shifting of his plagues — the first, content

To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and child,
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered — mortised in his
trunk;

Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs
foil

Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,

30 Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,

Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the
root,

And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on, — the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for
deed,

And paragon her namesake, win the meed
O' the great Matilda, — soon they over-
bore

The rest of Lombardy, — not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched

40 The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel
means.

"Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
"Himself behind Romano? — him we
bade

"Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the
shade!"

— Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tar-
diest

To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned,
plied

His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function — fruitlessly: 'twas
plain

Taurello through some weakness must 50
remain

Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both
— Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle — chose the
right,

Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: "thus," quoth he,
"wits are warped

"By outsiders!" Carelessly, meanwhile,
his life

Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
In many lands — you hardly could surprise
The man; who shamed Sordello (recog- 60
nise!)

In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the same —
Speaking the Greek's own language, just
because

Your Greek eludes you, leave the least
of flaws

In contracts with him; while, since Arab
lore

Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble
more

And master it! 'Tis done, and now deter
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined 70
for her,

From Friedrich's path! — Friedrich,
whose pilgrimage

The same man puts aside, whom he'll
engage

To leave next year John Brienne in the
lurch,

Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis'
church

And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
Which, — lend Taurello credit, — rivals
Greece —

Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's ex-
ploits.

For elegance, he strung the angelot,¹
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove 80
he not

Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper?
Why

Detail you thus a varied mastery
But to show how Taurello, on the watch
For men, to read their hearts and thereby
catch

Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed
these:

While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he'd show

¹ The lute.

Himself, and men had much or little worth
According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; the other's choicest instruments
Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malcontents
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser.

"How
"Change the world's face?" asked people;
"as 'tis now

"It has been, will be ever: very fine
"Subjecting things profane to things
divine,

20 "In talk! This contumacy will fatigue
"The vigilance of Este and the League!
"The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it
happened.

Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
Slept at Verona: either left a brace
Of sons — but, three years after, either's
pair

Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
As 'twere. Then, either Ecelin grew old

20 Or his brain altered — not o' the proper
mould

For new appliances — his old palm-stock
Endured no influx of strange strengths.
He'd rock

As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
As proud of the completeness of his woe,
Then weep real tears; — now make some
mad onslaught

On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue
peace

At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
30 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
And men remarked these freaks of peace
and war

Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
Whence every friend besought him, all in
vain,

To use his old adherent's wits again.
Not he! — "who had advisers in his sons,
"Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
"Advice." 'Twas Adclaide's remaining
staunch

Prevented his destruction root and branch
Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell,
for gay

40 He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and with-
drew

For ever from the world. Taurello, who
Was summoned to the convent, then
refused

A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish
smile.

Soon a few movements of the happier sort

Changed matters, put himself in men's
report

As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in pride
And flushing of this kind of second youth,
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
Lay prone — and men remembered,
somewhat late,

A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este — how it would outbreak
At times spite of disguise, like an earth-
quake

In sunny weather — as that noted day
When with his hundred friends he tried
to slay

Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how,
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
A liegeman's challenge, straight he too
was calmed:

As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and
survive

All intermediate crumbling, to arrive
At earth's catastrophe — 'twas Este's
crash

Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted.
He

'Twas, leaned in the embrasure absently, 70
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-seathed forefinger Fried-
rich's face

I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere,
his smile

Deepened, and words expressed its thought
crewhile.

"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old
compeer?

"That we should stick together, all the
year

"I kept Vicenza! — How old Boniface,
"Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,

"He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each
"In mid swing, more than fury of his 80
speech,

"Egging the rabble on to disavow
"Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus,
how

"They boasted! Ecelin must turn their
drudge,

"Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge
"Paying arrears of tribute due long
since —

"Bacchus! My man could promise then,
nor wince:

"The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind
and limb,

"Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
"And now he sits me, slaving and mute,

"Intent on chafing each starved purple foot 90
"Benumbed past aching with the alta
slab:

"Will no vein throb there when some monk
shall blab
"Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
"Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the
Alps?
"—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Ana-
clet?
"Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and
fret,
"God's own now? Drop the dormitory
bar,
"Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular!
"Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories
out!
"Sol! But the midnight whisper turns a
shout,
10 "Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
"In the stone walls: the past, the world
you hate
"Is with you, ambush, open field — or see
"The surging flame — we fire Vicenza —
glee!
"Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!
"Bring up the Mantuans — through San
Biagio — safe!
"Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they
writhe
"And reach us? If they block the gate?
(No tithe
"Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese!
The edge,
"Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt
down the wedge,
20 "Let out the black of those black upturned
eyes!
"Hell — are they sprinkling fire too?
The blood fries
"And hisses on your brass gloves as they
tear
"Those upturned faces choking with
despair.
"Brave! Slidder through the reeking
gate! 'How now?
"You six had charge of her?' And then
the vow
"Com's, and the foam spirts, hair's
plucked, till one shriek
"(I hear it) and you fling — you cannot
speak —
"Your gold-flowered basnet to a man
who haled
"The Adelaide he dared scarce view un-
veiled
30 "This morn, naked across the fire: how
crown
"The archer that exhausted lays you down
"Your infant, smiling at the flame, and
dies?
"While one, while mine . . .
"Bacchus! I think there lies
"More than one corpse there" (and he
paced the room)

* A loose sleeveless vestment.

"— Another cinder somewhere: 'twas
my doom
"Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,
"I live the same, this Azzo lives instead
"Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
"Este into a heap: the matter's now
"At the true juncture slipping us so oft. 40
"Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you,
doffed
"His crown at such a juncture! Still, if
holds
"Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain
enfolds
"The neck of . . . who but this same
Ecelin
"That must recoil when the best days
begin!
"Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler
leaves
"His name for me to fight with, no one
grieves:
"But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
"His cloister to become my stumbling-
block
"Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again — 50
"The land's inevitable Head — explain
"The reverences that subject us! Count
"These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,
"Originating power of thought, — from
twelve
"That drop i' the trenches they joined
hands to delve,
"Six shall surpass him, but . . . why men
must twine
"Somehow with something! Ecelin's a
fine
"Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless,
twine with me
"At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
"Was of a sort! I had to share myself 60
"In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
"That's forced illume in fifty points the
vast
"Rare vapour he's environed by. At last
"My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en
converge
"And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have
yet to urge
"The man be crowned!
"That aloe, an he durst,
"Would climb! Just such a bloated
sprawler first
"I noted in Messina's castle-court
"The day I came, when Heinrich asked in
sport
"If I would pledge my faith to win him 70
back
"His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid
pack
"Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead
"You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head
"Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see
her
"Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,

"Retrude following!

"I am absolved

"From further toil: the empery devolved

"On me, 'twas Tito's word: I have to lay

"For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,

"Prompt nobody, and render an account

"Taurello to Taurello! Nay, I mount

"To Friedrich: he conceives the post I kept,

"— Who did true service, able or inept,

"Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.

10 "Me guerdoned, counsel follows: would he vie

"With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface

"Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race

"Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point

"How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,

"The socket from the bone: my Azzo's stare

"Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,

"Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end

"To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend

"— How better than my old way? Had I one

20 "Who laboured to o'erthrow my work — a son

"Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,

"To root my pines up and then poison me,

"Suppose — 'twere worth while frustrate that! Beside

"Another life's ordained me: the world's tide

"Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press

"Of waves, a single wave though weariness

"Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?

"My life must be lived out in foam and roar,

"No question. Fifty years the province held

30 "Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,

"He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,

"These trees a year or two, then not a trace

"Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues

"Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —

"To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?

"— Flowers one may teaze, that never grow extinct.

"Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

"I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,

"To overawe the aloes; and we trod

"Those flowers, how call you such? — 4
into the sod;

"A stately foreigner — a world of pain

"To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain!

"It would decline; these would not be destroyed:

"And now, where is it? where can you avoid

"The flowers? I frighten children twenty years

"Longer! — which way, too, Ecelin appears

"To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth

"Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:

"They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate, 50
My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate

"Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise

"Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge! a prize

"Too precious, certainly.

"How now? Compete

"With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat

"His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know

"Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!

"What's changed — the weakness? did not I compound

"For that, and undertake to keep him sound

"Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering 60
After a boy's preferment — this plaything

"To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed. Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark

Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort

Fail: while these last are ever stopping short —

(So much they should — so little they can do!)

The careless tribe see nothing to pursue

If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds

Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned, —

Enough amused by fancies fairly earned 70
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,

And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck, —

To his own petty but immediate doubt

If he could pacify the League without

Conceding Richard; just to this was brought

That interval of vain discursive thought!

As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit

Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot

Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black

Enormous watercourse which guides him 80
back

To his own tribe again, where he is king;

And laughs because he guesses, numbering
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert-blast)
 That he has reached its boundary, at last
 May breathe; — thinks o'er enchantments
 of the South
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their
 mouth,
 Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchant-
 ments tried
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside
 For truth, projects a cool return with
 friends,
 The likelihood of winning mere amends
 Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort
 silently,
 Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs
 and he,
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are
 soon
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.
 Midnight: the watcher nodded on his
 spear,
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear
 For any meagre and discoloured moon
 To venture forth; and such was peering
 soon
 Above the harassed city — her close lanes
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep
 What little life was saved, more safely.
 Heap
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and
 beside
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
 Palma with none to listen. "'Tis your
 cause:
 "What makes a Ghibellin? There should
 be laws —
 go " (Remember how my youth escaped! I
 trust
 "To you for manhood, Palma! tell me
 just
 "As any child) — there must be laws at
 work
 "Explaining this. Assure me, good may
 lurk
 "Under the bad, — my multitude has part
 "In your designs, their welfare is at heart
 "With Salinguerra, to their interest
 "Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest
 "Our conference of much that scared me.
 Why
 "Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
 go "Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost
 mind
 "This morn, a recreant to my race — man-
 kind

"O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's
 force,
 "— Such force denied its object? why di-
 vorce
 "These, then admire my spirit's flight the
 same
 "As though it bore up, helped some half-
 orbed flame
 "Else quenched in the dead void, to living
 space?
 "That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
 "Why vaunt so much my unencumbered
 dance,
 "Making a feat's facilities enhance
 "Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one 54
 "Of happier fate, and all I should have
 done,
 "He does; the people's good being para-
 mount
 "With him, their progress may perhaps
 account
 "For his abiding still; whereas you heard
 "The talk with Tito — the excuse pre-
 ferred
 "For burning those five hostages, — and
 broached
 "By way of blind, as you and I approached,
 "I do believe."
 She spoke: then he, "My thought
 "Plainlier expressed! All to your profit —
 nought
 "Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve 60
 "For them, of wretchedness he might re-
 lieve
 "While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
 "Supports a cause: what cause? Do
 Guelfs pursue
 "Their ends by means like yours, or bet-
 ter?"
 When
 The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed
 with men,
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with
 blood and blaze,
 Morn broke: "Once more, Sordello, meet
 its gaze
 "Proudly — the people's charge against
 thee fails
 "In every point, while either party quails!
 "These are the busy ones: be silent thou! 70
 "Two parties take the world up, and allow
 "No third, yet have one principle, subside
 "By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist
 "With either, ranks with man's inveterate
 foes.
 "So there is one less quarrel to compose:
 "The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to
 curse —
 "I have done nothing, but both sides do
 worse
 "Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten,
 left
 "Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers,
 was left

"The notion of a service — ha? What lured
 "Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
 "Must move Taurello? What if there remained
 "A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
 "For me, its true discoverer?"

Some one pressed
 Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
 The subject for a ballad: "They must know

"The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
 "Consul of Rome — that's long ago for us,

10 "Minstrels' and bowmen, idly squabbling thus

"In the world's corner — but too late no doubt,

"For the brave time he sought to bring about.

"— Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?"
 Then

He cast about for terms to tell him, when
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used
 Whenever their Superior introduced
 A novice to the Brotherhood — ("for I

"Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
 "Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent

20 "Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
 "My wife or my brown sleeves") — some brother spoke

Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
 The edict issued, after his demise,

Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
 All out except a floating power, a name

Including, tending to produce the same
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived

at least

Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
 And a vile stranger, — two not worth a

slave

30 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave

The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed

In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
 Taking the people at their word, forth stepped

As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
 Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain

Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled

Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled
 Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem

40 Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
 — The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch!

He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
 The flame, Rome's just accomplished!

when returned

Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,

And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress

Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified

"Their Consul in the Forum; and abide
 "E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I

"Was once a brown-sleeve brother merrily 54
 "Appointed) — I had option to keep wife

"Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife

"Lose both. A song of Rome!"

And Rome, indeed,
 Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,

The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
 Looked an established point of light whence

rays

Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes

Beside of men, seemed bent on being Rome's

In their degree; the question was, how each

Should most resemble Rome, clean out of 60 reach.

Nor, of the Two, did either principle
 Struggle to change, but to possess Rome, — still

Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance!
 Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —

How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause!

Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —

Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;
 New structures, that inordinately glow,

Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe

By many a relic of the archetype 70
 Extant for wonder; every upstart church

That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,

Corrected by the Theatre forlorn
 That, — as a mundane shell, its world late

born, —

Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,

Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
 Once more in full possession of their rights.

"Let us have Rome again! On me it lights

"To build up Rome — on me, the first and last:

"For such a future was endured the past!" 84
 And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung

To give his thought consistency among
 The very People — let their facts avail

Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn? — merely a perished
husk

Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception
chilled

So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of
thine

— A Rome indebted to no Palatine —
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art pos-
sessed

Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons?

to Are this and this and this the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favoured tenantry pursue their way
After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard
trips

At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead
the brawls

"Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He
that sprawls

On aught but a stibadium¹ . . . what his
dues

Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters!
March,

to Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband — a
whim —

Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,
Nay, even the worst, — just house them!
Any cave

Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole?
Brave!

They ask to feel the sun shine, see the
grass

Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art
thou, alas,

And I am dead! But here's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and
shapes

30 His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt
was rough,

But that descendant's garb suits well
enough

A portico-contriver. Speed the years —
What's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter — what's the grave to
us?

Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum,
cirque —

¹ Roman couch.

Last age, an aqueduct was counted work, 40
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidian,
— Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgorant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples
pant

Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours — resemblance what,
between

That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant
sheen —

These Romans and our rabble? Use thy
wit!

The work marched: step by step, — a 50
workman fit

Took each, nor too fit, — to one task, one
time, —

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft
withe,

To further loam-and-roughcast-work a
stage, —

Exacts an architect, exacts an age
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple log's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. "Better" (say
you) "merge

"At once all workmen in the demiurge, 60
"All epochs in a lifetime, every task

"In one!" So should the sudden city bask
I' the day — while those we'd feast there,
want the knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck
and brack,

Distinguish not rare peacock from vile
swan,

Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.

"Enough of Rome! 'Twas happy to
conceive

"Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
"Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite

"Is an old story — serves my folly right 70
"By adding yet another to the dull

"List of abortions — things proved beauti-
ful

"Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and
threw

The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch,
and drift

Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. "Thou arche-
type,

"Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"
And then a low voice wound into his 80
heart:

"Sordello!" (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error — one mistake

² A kind of glass (volcanic).

- Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
 "God has conceded two sights to a man —
 "One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
 "The other, of the minute's work, man's first
 "Step to the plan's completeness: what's dispersed
 "Save hope of that supreme step which, desecrated
 "Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
 "Only to give you heart to take your own
 "Step, and there stay, leaving the rest alone?
 10 "Where is the vanity? Why count as one
 "The first step, with the last step? What is gone
 "Except Rome's æry magnificence,
 "That last step you'd take first? — an evidence
 "You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!
 "The basis, the beginning step of all,
 "Which proves you just a man — is that gone too?
 "Pity to disconcert one versed as you
 "In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
 "Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
 20 "Read the black writing — that collective man
 "Outstrips the individual. Who began
 "The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art
 "Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart —
 "Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
 "Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
 "Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
 "Woven into the echoes left erewhile
 "By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
 "Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!
 30 "An elder poet in the younger's place;
 "Nina's strength, but Alcamo's the grace:
 "Each neutralises each then! Search your fill;
 "You get no whole and perfect Poet — still
 "New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night
 "Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light
 "Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
 "Every ideal workman — (to reject
 "In favour of your fearful ignorance
 "The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
 40 "And point you but to those within your reach) —
 "Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)
- "The Multitude to be materialised?
 "That loose eternal unrest — who devised
 "An apparition i' the midst? The rout
 "Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
 "That sudden flower: get round at any risk
 "The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
 "O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign
 "And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
 "— The very child of over-joyousness, 5
 "Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress
 "Of strength comes of that forehead confident,
 "Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,
 "A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves
 "For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves
 "Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
 "He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
 "Was it Sordello pried into the work
 "So far accomplished, and discovered lurk 6
 "A company amid the other clans,
 "Only distinct in priests for castellans
 "And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
 "Its rule, their interest its interest,
 "Living for sake of living — there an end —
 "Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
 "In making adversaries or allies) —
 "Dived you into its capabilities
 "And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
 "Should turn a multitude, already whole,
 "Into its body? Speak plainer! Is't so 7
 "sure
 "God's church lives by a King's investiture?
 "Look to last step! A staggering — a shock —
 "What's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
 "Endures: a column of black fiery dust
 "Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust
 "Aside, perchance! — but air clears, nought's erased
 "Of the true outline. Thus much being firm based,
 "The other was a scaffold. See him stand
 "Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand
 "Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er 8
 "ply
 "As in a forge; it buries either eye
 "White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,

"The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,
 "As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
 "Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought
 "At dead-lock, agonising he, until
 "The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
 "The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
 "They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
 "Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,
 "Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
 10 "Rather, — a fruit of suffering's excess,
 "Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
 "Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years
 "Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
 "Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,
 "Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch
 "Another, letting both their trains go by
 "The actors-out of either's policy,
 "Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
 "Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
 20 "Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —
 "While Alexander, Innocent uphold
 "On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,
 "Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
 "How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
 "For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
 "Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
 "Alone? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry
 "At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
 "Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays
 30 "Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade —
 "Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
 "Than Strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue
 "Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
 "Yonder! The League — or trick of turning Strength
 "Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at length.
 "Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease
 "The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace

"Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede
 "The very Use of Strength, is safe. In deed
 "We trench upon the future. Who is 40 found
 "To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —
 "Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display
 "Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way
 "O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence
 "Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?
 "Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —
 "E'en were Sordello ready to forego
 "His life for this, 'twere overleaping work
 "Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
 "Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten 50 road.
 "Who means to help must still support the load
 "Hildebrand lifted — 'why hast Thou,' he groaned,
 "Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had moaned,
 "And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done — and yet
 "Doubtless that grandest task God over set
 "On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,
 "Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench
 "Merely, start back again — perchance have been
 "Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,
 "Hammer the tenons¹ better, and engage 60
 "A gang about your work, for the next age
 "Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
 "By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
 "Sordello on his race — would time divulge
 "Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge
 "Calls for correction by a step we thought
 "Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
 "No progress! And the scaffold in its turn
 "Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
 "Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of 70 life
 "In store dispose you to forego the strife,

¹ A word of carpentry — the projecting piece of wood fitting into framework.

- "Who takes exception? Only bear in mind
 "Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:
 "As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
 "— The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
 "Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
 "Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
 "By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard
 "Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
 "Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
 10 "His sense, yet write no verses — you have but
 "To please yourself for law, and once could please
 "What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
 "Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
 "But all is changed the moment you descry
 "Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade
 "Ends once and always: how many half evade
 "The other half? men are found half of you.
 "Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
 "Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
 20 "From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
 "Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
 "Of fancy, — then, while one half lolls aloof
 "I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —
 "See if, for that, your other half will stop
 "A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,
 "Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
 "To sit about their town and quietly
 "Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,
 "With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
 30 "'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'
 "Cheering each other from the engine-mounts, —
 "That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
 "How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
 "Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
 "And wriggles round the archers on his head
 "To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread, —
 "And Cino, always in the self-same place
- "Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
 "Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
 "The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide 41
 "A double watch in the noon sun; and see
 "Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
 "Trim hacqueton,¹ spruce beard and scented hair,
 "Campaigning it for the first time — cut there
 "In two already, boy enough to crawl
 "For latter orpine round the southern wall,
 "Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore
 "Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
 "Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:
 "And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty 50
 "liege,
 "Cared for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed
 "A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,
 "Delivering herself of his first child
 "On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
 "To fifty gazers!" — (Here a wind below
 "Made moody music augural of woe
 "From the pine barrier) — "What if, now the scene
 "Draws to a close, yourself have really been
 "— You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
 "Like edges of a trabea² (not to cross 60
 "Your consul-humour) or dry aloë-shafts
 "For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,
 "This very age, her whole inheritance
 "Of opportunities? Yet you advance
 "Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
 "There's Salinguerra left you to persuade:
 "Fail! then" —
 "No — no — which latest chance secure!"
 "Leaped up and cried Sordello: "this made sure,
 "The past were yet redeemable; its work
 "Was — help the Gueffs, whom I, how'er 70
 "it irk,
 "Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloc-haulm
 "Out of his doublet; paused, proceeded calm
 "To the appointed presence. The large head
 "Turned on its socket; "And your spokes-man," said
 "The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?
 "Few such" — (so finishing a speech no doubt

¹ A quilted jacket.² A purple toga.

Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
 "— My sober councils have diversified.
 "Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
 "Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"

The hesitating sunset floated back,
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth
 Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
 Opposite, — outlined sudden, spur to crest,
 10 That solid Salinguerra, and carressed
 Palma's contour; 'twas day looped back
 night's pall;
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all.
 And much he made of the convincing
 speech
 Meant to compensate for the past and
 reach
 Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit,
 quite
 To his noon's labour, so proceed till night
 Leisurely! The great argument to bind
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and
 mind,
 — Came the consummate rhetoric to that?
 20 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
 Through his accustomed fault of breaking
 yoke,
 Disjoining him who felt from him who
 spoke.
 Was't not a touching incident — so prompt
 A rendering the world its just account,
 Once proved its debtor? Who'd suppose,
 before
 This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
 At duty's instance could demean himself
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
 30 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
 Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those
 Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged
 The need of Lombardy becoming purged
 At soonest of her barons; the poor part
 Abandoned thus, missing the blood at
 heart
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
 Elsewhere! But, though his speech was
 worthy scoff,
 Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for
 tact
 40 And tongue, who, careless of his phrase,
 ne'er lacked
 The right phrase, and harangued Honorius
 dumb
 At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb
 To purpose and himself found interest
 In every point his new instructor pressed
 — Left playing with the rescript's white
 wax seal
 To scrutinise Sordello head and heel.
 He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!
 All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass
 "That poesy, sooner than politics

"Makes fade young hair?" To think so
 such speck could fix
 Taurello!

Then a flash of bitter truth:
 So fantasies could break and fritter youth
 That he had long ago lost earnestness,
 Lost will to work, lost power to even
 express
 The need of working! Earth was turned
 a grave:
 No more occasions now, though he should
 crave
 Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
 To do what was undone, repair such
 spoil,
 Alter the past — nothing would give the
 chance!
 Not that he was to die; he saw askance 60
 Protract the ignominious years beyond
 To dream in — time to hope and time
 despond,
 Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
 As saved a trouble; he might, at his
 choice,
 One way or other, idle life out, drop
 No few smooth verses by the way — for
 prop,
 A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
 Should pick up, and set store by, — far
 from blame,
 Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better
 part
 Survived him. "Rather tear men out the 70
 heart
 "O' the truth!" — Sordello muttered, and
 renewed
 His propositions for the Multitude.
 But Salinguerra, who at this attack
 Had thrown great breast and ruffling
 corslet back
 To hear the better, smilingly resumed
 His task; beneath, the carroch's warning
 boomed;
 He must decide with Tito; courteously
 He turned then, even seeming to agree
 With his admonisher — "Assist the Pope,
 "Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope 80
 "O' the Church, thus based on All, by All,
 for All —
 "Change Secular to Evangelical" —
 Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,
 When suddenly he looked up, laughingly
 almost,
 To Palma: "This opinion of your
 friend's —
 "For instance, would it answer Palma's
 ends?
 "Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our
 Strength" —
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its length)
 — "To the Pope's Knowledge — let our
 captive slip,
 "Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, 90
 equip

- "Azzo with . . . what I hold here!
Who'll subscribe
"To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
"Henceforward? or pronounce, as Hein-
rich used,
"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for
the joust!"
"— When Constance, for his couplets,
would promote
"Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat,
"To holding her lord's stirrup in the
wars.
"Not that I see where couplet-making
jars
"With common sense: at Mantua I had
borne—
10 "This chanted, better than their most for-
lorn
"Of bull-baits, — that's indisputable!"
Brave!
Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall
save!
All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends
or foes?
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special
link?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what amerced
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
20 Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoever it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and
head
Of — "Men of Action," as the Jongleurs
said,
— "The Great Men," in the people's
dialect?
And not a moment did this scorn affect
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for
once,
Asking "what was," obtained a full re-
sponse.
Bid Naddo think at Mantua — he had but
30 To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since within his
soul,
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty — all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?
Next day no formularies more you saw
40 Next figs or olives in a sated maw.
'Tis Knowledge, whither such perceptions
tend;
They lose themselves in that, means to
an end,
The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
- The Caliph's wheel-work man¹ of brass
receives
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce
leaves
Together in his stomach rattle loose;
You find them perfect next day to 'pro-
duce:
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of
that,
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
5 Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was
stored
Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the People formed
a ring,
Of visionary judges whose award
He recognised in full — faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless life,
In whose great presence, therefore, his
first strife
For their sake must not be ignobly fought;
All these, for once, approved of him, he 60
thought,
Suspended their own vengeance, chose
await
The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it — in fact
He must be proved king ere they could
exact
Vengeance for such king's defalcation.
Last,
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
Disguised the royalty so much: he there —
7 And Salinguerra yet all-unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman!
"Thus I lay
"On thine my spirit and compel obey
"His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to
build
"Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
"In what such builder should have been,
as brook
"One shame beyond the charge that I for-
sook
"His function! Free me from that shame,
I bend
"A brow before, suppose new years to
spend, —
"Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly,
recur —
"Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, 8
demur
"At any crowd he claims! That I must
cede
"Shamed now, my right to my especial
need —
"Confess thee fitter help the world than I
"Ordained its champion from eternity,

¹ One of the automata sent by Haroun-al-Raschid to Charlemagne.

- "Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post
 "I quit in thy behalf - to hear thee boast
 "What makes my own despair!" And while he rung
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
 Into the distance, or embowering vied
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
 And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
 To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint
 Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl
 The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all
 For Hercules to trample — good report
 From Salanguerra only to extort?
 "So was I" (closed he his inculcating
 A poet must be earth's essential king)
 "So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
 "'Tis not the royalty, ye witness quail,
 "But one deposed who, caring not exert
 "Its proper essence, trifled malapert
 "With accidents instead — good things assigned
 "As heralds of a better thing behind —
 "And, worthy through display of these, put forth
 "Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
 "That constitutes him king precisely since
 "As yet no other spirit may evince
 "Its like: the power he took most pride to test,
 "Whereby all forms of life had been professed
 "At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
 "Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth
 "Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
 "Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
 "The several forms he longed to imitate,
 "Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
 "Those forms, unalterable first as last,
 "Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
 "Of nature: what would come of being free,
 "By action to exhibit tree for tree,
 "Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
 "One veritable man or woman more?
- "Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?
 "Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend —
 "Never contract. Already you include
 "The multitude; then let the multitude
 "Include yourself; and the result were new:
 "Themselves before, the multitude turn 50
 you.
 "This were to live and move and have, in them,
 "Your being, and secure a diadem
 "You should transmit (because no cycle
 years
 beyond itself, but on itself returns)
 "When, the full sphere in wane, the world
 o'erlaid
 "Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
 "Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
 "More potent than the last, of human will,
 "And some new king depose the old. Of such
 "Am I — whom pride of this elates too 60
 much?
 "Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
 "I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
 "Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,
 "Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, retrack
 "My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —
 "Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! then, needs must
 "Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
 "The brawl to — yellow-bearded Jupiter?
 "No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
 "And protest against Chaos, some first fact 70
 "I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
 "Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
 . . . "Deeds in their due gradation till
 Song dawned —
 "The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
 "All in degree, no way diverse in kind
 "From minds about it, minds which, more or less,
 "Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
 "Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed
 "Step after step, by just ascent sublimed. 80
 "Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,
 "Soul is from body still to disengage
 "As tending to a freedom which rejects
 "Such help and incorporeally affects
 "The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
 "Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,

- "Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
 "To patiently perform till Song produced
 "Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind:
 divest
 "Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's un-
 expressed
 "Will draws above us! All then is to win
 "Save that. How much for me, then?
 where begin
 "My work? About me, faces! and they
 flock,
 "The earnest faces. What shall I unlock
 "By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it
 be,
 10 "To minister: how much can mortals see
 "Of Life? No more than so? I take the
 task
 "And marshal you Life's elemental
 masque,
 "Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
 "This light, this shade make prominent,
 suppress
 "All ordinary hues that softening blend
 "Such natures with the level. Apprehend
 "Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
 "Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
 "To those you doubt concerning! I en-
 womb
 20 "Some wretched Friedrich with his red-
 hot tomb;
 "Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
 "With the black chastening river I en-
 gulph!
 "Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
 "With languors of the planet of decline —
 "These, fail to recognise, to arbitrate
 "Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
 "Thus marshalled in the masque! My-
 self, the while,
 "As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
 "At my own showing! Next age —
 what's to do?
 30 "The men and women stationed hitherto
 "Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
 "Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
 "At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted,
 breaks
 "A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
 "Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom:
 behold
 "How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
 "Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
 "Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace
 make, war wage,
 "In presence of you all! Myself, implied
 40 "Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
 "I bade them do and suffer, — would last
 content
 "The world . . . no — that's too far! I
 circumvent
 "A few, my masque contented, and to these
 "Offer unveil the last of mysteries —
 "Man's inmost life shall have yet freer
 play:
- "Once more I cast external things away,
 "And natures composite, so decompose
 "That" . . . Why, he writes *Sordello*!
 "How I rose,
 "And how have you advanced! since ever-
 more
 "Yourselves effect what I was fain before 50
 "Effect, what I supplied yourselves sug-
 gest,
 "What I leave bare yourselves can now in-
 vest.
 "How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
 "In half-words, call things by half-names,
 no balk
 "From discontinuing old aids. To-day
 "Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
 "Has not the world a Past now, its adept
 "Consults ere he dispense with or accept
 "New aids? a single touch more may
 enhance,
 "A touch less turn to insignificance 60
 "Those structures' symmetry the past has
 strewn
 "The world with, once so bare. Leave
 the mere rude
 "Explicit details! 'tis but brother's speech
 "We need, speech where an accent's
 change gives each
 "The other's soul — no speech to under-
 stand
 "By former audience: need was then to
 expand,
 "Expatriate — hardly were we brothers!
 true —
 "Nor I lament my small remove from you,
 "Nor reconstruct what stands already.
 Ends
 "Accomplished turn to means: my art 70
 intends
 "New structure from the ancient: as they
 changed
 "The spoils of every clime at Venice,
 ranged
 "The horned and snouted Libyan god,
 upright
 "As in his desert, by some simple bright
 "Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,
 "Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
 "From earth's reputed consummations
 razed
 "A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
 "Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'er-
 theless
 "E'en he must stoop contented to express 80
 "No tithe of what's to say — the vehicle
 "Never sufficient: but his work is still
 "For faces like the faces that select
 "The single service I am bound effect, —
 "That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
 "Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
 "The Kaiser's coming — which with heart,
 soul, strength,
 "I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
 "My past career's outrageous vanity,

"And would, as its amends, die, even die
 "Now I first estimate the boon of life,
 "If death might win compliance — sure,
 this strife
 "Is right for once — the People my sup-
 port."
 My poor Sordello! what may we extort
 By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
 Turned to Taurello who, long past sur-
 prise,
 Began, "You love him — what you'd say
 at large
 "Let me say briefly. First, your father's
 charge
 10 "To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed
 indeed
 "You were no stranger to the course de-
 creed
 "He bids me leave his children to the
 saints:
 "As for a certain project, he acquaints
 "The Pope with that, and offers him the
 best
 "Of your possessions to permit the rest
 "Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe
 "Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
 "— To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
 "Clutches already; extricate, who can,
 20 "Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
 "Loria and Cartiglione! — all must go,
 "And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost,
 then! Lost
 "This eve, our crisis, and some pains it
 cost
 "Procuring; thirty years — as good I'd
 spent
 "Like our admonisher! But each his bent
 "Pursues: no question, one might live
 absurd
 "Oneself this while, by deed as he by word
 "Persisting to obtrude an influence where
 "'Tis made account of, much as . . . nay,
 you fare
 30 "With twice the fortune, youngster! — I
 submit,
 "Happy to parallel my waste of wit
 "With the renowned Sordello's: you de-
 cide
 "A course for me. Romano may abide
 "Romano, — Bacchus! After all, what
 dearth
 "Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
 "Say there's a prize in prospect, must dis-
 grace
 "Betide competitors, unless they style
 "Themselves Romano? Were it worth
 my while
 "To try my own luck! But an obscure
 place
 40 "Suits me — there wants a youth to
 bustle, stalk
 "And attitudinise — some fight, more talk,
 "Most flaunting badges — how, I might
 make clear

"Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
 "— Here, pity they are like to lie! For
 me,
 "With station fixed unceremoniously
 "Long since, small use contesting; I am
 but
 "The liegeman — you are born the lieges:
 shut
 "That gentle mouth now! or resume your
 kin
 "In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
 "For me to work with! Could that neck 50
 endure
 "This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,
 "She should . . . or might one bear it for
 her? Stay —
 "I have not been so flattered many a day
 "As by your pale friend — Bacchus! The
 least help
 "Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's
 whelp:
 "His neck is broad enough — a ready
 tongue
 "Beside: too writhled — but, the main
 thing, young —
 "I could . . . why, look ye!"
 And the badge was thrown
 Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone
 "Makes you Romano's Head — becomes 60
 superb
 "On your bare neck, which would, on mine,
 disturb
 "The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad
 act,
 Nor even dreamed about before — in fact,
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the
 nonce —
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
 With power: the thing was done, and he,
 aware
 The thing was done, proceeded to de-
 clare —
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel
 In serving, only feel by service well!)
 — That he would make Sordello that and 70
 more.
 "As good a scheme as any. What's to pore
 "At in my face?" he asked — "ponder in-
 stead
 "This piece of news; you are Romano's
 Head!
 "One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
 "Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
 "This time! For you there's Palma to
 espouse —
 "For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
 "Like my compeer."
 On which ensued a strange
 And solemn visitation; there came change
 O'er every one of them; each looked on 80
 each:
 Up in the midst a truth grew, without
 speech.
 And when the giddiness sank and the haze

Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
Silent, though his proportions seemed as-
pire

Momently; and, interpreting the thrill, —
Night at its ebb, — Palma was found there
still

Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
A year ago, while dying on her breast, —
Of a contrivance, that Vicenza night
When Ecelin had birth. "Their convoy's
flight

10 "Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
"That wallowed like a dragon at his
game

"The toppling city through — San Biagio
rocks!

"And wounded lies in her delicious locks
"Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
"None of her wasted, just in one embrace
"Covering her child: when, as they lifted
her,

"Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
"And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
"Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves
the smoke,

20 "Midmost to cheer his Mantuans on-
ward — drown

"His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up and
down

"The disarray: failed Adelaide see then
"Who was the natural chief, the man of
men?

"Outstripping time, her infant there burst
swathe,

"Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the
scathe

"From wandering after his heritage

"Lost once and lost for aye: and why that
rage,

"That deprecating glance? A new shape
leant

"On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent

30 "O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it
wore,

"Still one outflamed the rest — her child's
before

"'Twas Salinguerra's for his child: scorn,
hate,

"Rage now might startle her when all too
late!

"Then was the moment! — rival's foot had
spurned

"Never that House to earth else! Sense
returned —

"The act conceived, adventured and com-
plete,

"They bore away to an obscure retreat

"Mother and child — Retrude's self not
slain"

(Nor even here Taurello moved) "though
pain

40 "Was fled; and what assured them most
'twas fled,

"All pain, was, if they raised the pale
hushed head

"'Twould turn this way and that, waver
awhile,

"And only settle into its old smile —

"(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
"Steadying itself, remarked they, in the
quag

"On either side their path) — when
suffered look

"Down on her child. They marched: no
sign once shook

"The company's close litter of crossed
spears

"Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
"Slipped in the sunset from her long black
lash,

"And she was gone. So far the action
rash;

"No crime. They laid Retrude in the
font,

"Taurello's very gift, her child was wont

"To sit beneath — constant as eve he came

"To sit by its attendant girls the same

"As one of them. For Palma, she would
blend

"With this magnific spirit to the end,

"That ruled her first; but scarcely had she
dared

"To disobey the Adelaide who scared

"Her into vowing never to disclose

"A secret to her husband, which so froze

"His blood at half-recital, she contrived

"To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,

"Lest, by revealing that, himself should
mar

"Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,

"Palma received that action: she was told

"Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold

"Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free

"To impart the secret to Romano, she

"Engaged to repossess Sordello of

"His heritage, and hers, and that way doff

"The mask, but after years, long years:
while now,

"Was not Romano's sign-mark on that
brow?"

Across Taurello's heart his arms were
locked:

And when he did speak 'twas as if he
mocked

The minstrel, "who had not to move," he
said,

"Nor stir — should fate defraud him of a
shred

"Of his son's infancy? much less his
youth!"

(Laughingly all this) — "which to aid, in
truth,

"Himself, reserved on purpose, had not
grown

"Old, not too old — 'twas best they kept
alone

"Till now, and never idly met till now;"

— Then, in the same breath, told Sordello
 how
 All intimations of this eve's event
 Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to
 Trent,
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there
 stop,
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
 — "That's now! — no prophesying what
 may be
 "Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
 "Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime
 "At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
 "On whom . . ."
 "Embrace him, madman!" Palma cried,
 Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops
 burst apace,
 And his lips blanching: he did not embrace
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.
 Understand,
 This while Sordello was becoming flushed
 Out of his whiteness; thoughts rushed,
 fancies rushed;
 He pressed his hand upon his head and
 signed
 Both should forbear him. "Nay, the
 best's behind!"
 Taurello laughed — not quite with the
 same laugh:
 "The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like
 chaff
 "These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils
 "From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
 "Our triumph! — Friedrich? Think you,
 I intend
 "Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I
 spend
 "And brain I waste? Think you, the
 people clap
 "Their hands at my out-hewing this wild
 gap
 "For any Friedrich to fill up? 'Tis
 mine —
 "That's yours: I tell you, towards some
 such design
 "Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,
 "And for another, yes — but worked no
 less
 "With instinct at my heart; I else had
 swerved,
 "While now — look round! My cunning
 has preserved
 "Samminiato — that's a central place
 "Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's
 case.
 "By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,
 "And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
 "The land at leisure! Gloriously dis-
 persed —
 "Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
 "That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in
 the March;

"On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
 "Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
 "Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;
 "Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure!" . . .
 So he proceeded: half of all this, pure
 Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
 But what was undone he felt sure to do,
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm
 play —
 Need of the sword now! That would 54
 soon adjust
 Aught wrong at present; to the sword
 intrust
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 'twas
 plain
 He hardly rendered right to his own
 brain —
 Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match
 men!
 Palma had listened patiently: but when
 'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one, 60
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that
 done,
 Made him avert his visage and relieve
 Sordello (you might see his corslet heave
 The while) who, loose, rose — tried to
 speak, then sank:
 They left him in the chamber. All was
 blank.
 And even reeling down the narrow stair
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware
 Palma was by to guide him, the old device
 — Something of Milan — "how we muster
 thrice
 "The Torriani's strength there; all along 70
 "Our own Visconti cowed them" — thus
 the song
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of
 arrowloop,
 The turnings to the gallery below,
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him
 go.
 When he had sat in silence long enough
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a
 rebuff
 She stopped the truncheon; only to com-
 mence
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of "Elys" 84
 hair
 "And head that's sharp and perfect like
 a pear,
 "So smooth and close are laid the few fine
 locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from top-
 most rocks
 "Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer" —
 from his worst

Performance, the Goito, as his first:
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow
 And open mouth no sience would serve
 now,
 Went on to say the whole world loved that
 man
 And, for that matter, thought his face,
 tho' wan,
 Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each
 phrase
 As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees,
 made
 Her face a framework with his hands, a
 shade,
 10 A crown, an aureole: there must she
 remain
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling
 pain
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche
 Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed
 her brow,
 — "Lauded her father for his treason
 now,"
 He told her, "only, how could one suspect
 "The wit in him? — whose clansman,
 recollect,
 "Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,
 "Romano and his lady — so, might claim
 20 "To know all, as she should" — and thus
 begun
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on
 schemes, "not one
 "Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,
 "But only let Sordello Palma wed,
 "— Then!"
 'Twas a dim long narrow place at best:
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
 As shows its corpse the world's end some
 split tomb —
 A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
 Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set
 Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
 30 Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
 The hollow underneath — how else begin
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
 The ages than with Palma plain in view?
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched,
 head erect,
 Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked
 Monotony made out from his quick talk
 And the recurring noises of his walk;
 — Somewhat too much like the o'er-
 charged assent
 Of two resolved friends in one danger
 blent,
 40 Who hearten each the other against heart;
 Boasting there's nought to care for, when,
 apart
 The boaster, all's to care for. He, beside
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly
 near,

Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his
 ear
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-
 fraught,
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you
 caught,
 And on he strode into the opposite dark,
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
 1' the stone, and whirl of some loose em-
 bossed thong
 That crashed against the angle aye so long
 After the last, punctual to an amount
 Of mailed great paces you could not but
 count, —
 Prepared you for the pacing back again.
 And by the snatches you might ascertain
 That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted,
 left
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft
 Asunder, crushed together, at command
 Of none, were free to break up Hilde-
 brand,
 Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne — 6
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge,
 "if we deign
 "Accept that compromise and stoop to
 give
 "Rome law, the Caesar's Representative."
 Enough, that the illimitable flood
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
 Him on till, these long quiet in their
 graves,
 He found 'twas looked for that a whole
 life's braves
 Should somehow be made good; so, weak 7
 and worn,
 Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn
 Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
 But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height —
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
 He had our very Italy to keep
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap
 To garrison the better — ay, his word
 Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,
 "Drive Trent upon Apulia" — at their 8
 pitch
 Who spied the continents and islands which
 Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the
 map —
 (Strange that three such confessions so
 should hap
 To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
 Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her
 task
 Was done, the labour of it, — for, success
 Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress.)
 Triumph at height, and thus Sordello 9
 crowned —
 Above the passage suddenly a sound

Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks
 Taurello, bids
 With large involuntary asking lids,
 Palma interpret. "Tis his own foot-
 stamp —
 "Your hand! His summons! Nay, this
 idle damp
 "Befits not!" Out they two reeled
 dizzily.
 "Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he,
 In the old, somewhat insignificant way —
 (Was Palma wort, years afterward, to say)
 As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus
 far,
 Dropped at that very instant.
 Gone they are —
 Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
 Ecelin, — only Naddo's never gone!
 — Labours, this moonrise, what the
 Master meant:
 "Ts Squarciauppo speckled? — purulent,
 "I'd say, but when was Providence put out?
 "He carries somehow handily about
 "His spite nor fouls himself." Goito's
 vines
 Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough
 lines,
 The moon breaks through, a grey mean
 scale against
 The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou
 remain'st
 Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who
 can tell?
 As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so
 well,
 Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
 Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.
 While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha!
 wait
 No longer: these in compass, forward fate

BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a
 thought,
 And yet a false one, was, "Man shrinks to
 nought
 "If matched with symbols of immensity;
 "Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
 "Or sea, too little for their quietude:"
 And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
 Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow
 sank
 Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
 And only one spot left from out the night
 Glimmered upon the river opposite —
 A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
 A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
 And star for star, one richness where they
 mixed
 As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
 Tumultuary splendours folded in

To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
 (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's
 lip
 Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
 In a new fancy's birth — the speech keeps
 on
 Though elsewhere its informing soul be
 gone)
 — Aroused him, surely offered succour.
 Fate
 Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate
 Herself, — best put off new strange
 thoughts awhile,
 That voice, those large hands, that por- 50
 tentous smile, —
 What help to pierce the future as the past
 Lay in the plaining city?
 And at last
 The main discovery and prime concern,
 All that just now imported him to learn,
 Truth's self, like yonder slow moon to
 complete
 Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,
 Lighted his old life's every shift and
 change,
 Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it
 checked,
 Some other — which of these could he 60
 suspect,
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
 The real way seemed made up of all the
 ways —
 Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
 Demanding only outward influence,
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
 Power to uplift his power, — such moon's
 control
 Over such sea-depths, — and their mass
 had swept
 Onward from the beginning and still kept 70
 its course: but years and years the sky
 above
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
 His sensitiveness idled, now amorphous,
 Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
 At every passing instigation, grew
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers
 split,
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef — found 80
 place
 For much display; not gathered up and,
 hurled
 Right from its heart, encompassing the
 world.
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,
 Without a function: others made pretence
 To strength not half his own, yet had some
 core

Within, submitted to some moon, before
 Them still, superior still whate'er their
 force, —
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
 Nor missed life's crown, authentic attri-
 bute.
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit
 Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
 To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,
 10 Amass the scintillations, make one star
 — Something unlike them, self-sustained,
 afar, —
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being
 blest
 By winning it to notice and invest
 Their souls with alien glory, some one day
 When'er the nucleus, gathering shape
 alway,
 Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,
 According as themselves are formed to
 wait;
 Whether mere human beauty will suffice
 The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
 20 Or human intellect seem best, or each
 Combine in some ideal form past reach
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some
 aim,
 Some love, hate even, take their place, the
 same,
 So to be served — all this they do not lose,
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
 What must be Hell — a progress thus
 pursued
 Through all existence, still above the food
 That's offered them, still fain to reach
 beyond
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond
 30 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
 To swaying all Sordello: but why doubt
 Some love meet for such strength, some
 moon without
 Would match his sea? — or fear, Good
 manifest,
 Only the Best breaks faith? — Ah but the
 Best
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
 And is not! Crave we gems? No penury
 Of their material round us! Pliant earth
 And plastic flame — what baulks the mage
 his birth
 40 — Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the
 block?
 Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the
 rock;
 Nought more! Seek creatures? Life's i'
 the tempest, thought
 Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods
 are fraught
 With fervours: human forms are well
 enough!
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
 Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond
 These actual men! — and thus are over-
 fond
 In arguing, from Good — the Best, from
 force
 Divided — force combined, an ocean's
 course
 From this our sea whose mere intestine 50
 pants
 Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
 External power! If none be adequate,
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder
 fate)
 Himself a law to his own sphere? "Re-
 move
 "All incompleteness!" for that law, that
 love?
 Nay, if all other laws be feints, — truth
 veiled
 Helpfully to weak vision that had failed
 To grasp aught but its special want, —
 for lure,
 Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
 The unbodied want: no part — the whole 60
 of truth!
 The People were himself; nor, by the ruth
 At their condition, was he less impelled
 To alter the discrepancy beheld,
 Than if, from the sound whole, a sickly
 part
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out
 with art,
 Then palmed on him as alien woe — the
 Gulf
 To succour, proud that he forsook himself.
 All is himself; all service, therefore, rates
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
 The rest: but all in time! "That lance of 70
 yours
 "Makes havoc soon with Malek and his
 Moors,
 "That buckler's lined with many a giant's
 beard
 "Ere long, our champion, be the lance,
 upreared,
 "The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
 "But view your escort, bear in mind your
 vow,
 "Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere
 that,
 "And, if you hope we struggle through
 the flat,
 "Put lance and buckler by! Next half-
 month lacks
 "Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
 "To cleave this dismal brake of prickly- 80
 pear
 "Which bristling holds Cydippe by the
 hair,
 "Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled,
 we'll try
 "The picturesque achievements by and
 by —
 "Next life!"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
 Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to
 the verge,
 Push a vain mummery which perchance
 distrust
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — (as
 yet
 He had unconsciously contrived forget
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . .
 one might assuage
 The signal horrors easier than engage
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
 To correspond . . .) this Crowd then,
 forth they stood.
 "And now content thy stronger vision,
 brood
 "On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by
 turf,
 "Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-
 worms' scurf!"
 Down sank the People's Then; uprose
 their Now.
 These sad ones render service to! And
 how
 Piteously little must that service prove
 — Had surely proved in any case! for,
 move
 Each other obstacle away, let youth
 Become aware it had surprised a truth
 'Twere service to impart — can truth be
 seized,
 Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
 Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
 So happily, no gesture luring it,
 The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
 Most vain! a life to spend ere this he
 chain
 To the poor crowd's complacence: ere
 the crowd
 Pronounce it captured, he describes a cloud
 Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in
 turn,
 If he shall live as many lives, may learn
 How to secure: not else. Then Mantua
 called
 Back to his mind how certain bards were
 thrall'd
 — Buds blasted, but of breath more like
 perfume
 Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion
 bloom;
 Some insane rose that burnt heart out in
 sweets,
 A spendthrift in the spring, no summer
 greets;
 Some Dularete, drunk with truths and
 wine,
 Grown bestial, dreaming how become
 divine.
 Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence

With the commencement, merits crowning!
 Hence
 Must truth be casual truth, elicited
 In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
 So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
 Of the world's story has not truth, the
 prime
 Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had
 hurled
 The world's course right, been really in
 the world
 — Content the while with some mean
 spark by dint
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint 54
 Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast,
 would stream
 Sky-ward!
 Sordello's miserable gleam
 Was looked for at the moment: he would
 dash
 This badge, and all it brought, to earth, —
 abash
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
 The Kaiser from his purpose, — would
 attest
 His own belief, in any case. Before
 He dashes it, however, think once more!
 For, were that little, truly service? "Ay,
 "I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? 60
 Plain you spy
 "Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
 "Of vision blur each intervening cause.
 "Were the day's fraction clear as the life's
 sum
 "Of service, Now as filled as teems To-
 come
 "With evidence of good — nor too minute
 "A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
 "'Twere fittest maintain the Guelfs in
 rule:
 "That makes your life's work: but you
 have to school
 "Your day's work on these natures cir-
 cumstanced
 "Thus variously, which yet, as each ad- 70
 vanced
 "Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be
 moved
 "Now, for the Then's sake, — hating what
 you loved,
 "Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man
 bore
 "Brand upon temples while his fellow
 wore
 "The aureole, would it task you to decide:
 "But, portioned duly out, the future vied
 "Never with the unparcelled present!
 Smite
 "Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?
 "The present's complete sympathies to
 break,
 "Aversions bear with, for a future's sake 84
 "So feeble? Tito ruined through one
 speck,

- "The Legate saved by his sole lightish
fleck?"
- "This were work, true, but work per-
formed at cost
- "Of other work; aught gained here, else-
where lost.
- "For a new segment spoil an orb half-
done?"
- "Rise with the People one step, and sink —
one?"
- "Were it but one step, less than the whole
face
- "Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
- "Harms to abolish! What, the prophet
saith,
- "The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old
faith,
- 10 "Old courage, only born because of harms,
"Were not, from highest to the lowest,
charms?"
- "Flame may persist; but is not glare as
staunch?"
- "Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals
branch;
- "Blood dries to crimson; Evil's beautified
"In every shape. Thrust Beauty then
aside
- "And banish Evil! Wherefore? After
all,
- "Is Evil a result less natural
- "Than Good? For overlook the seasons'
strife
- "With tree and flower, — the hideous
animal life,
- 20 "(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning
taunt
- "For his solution, and endure the vaunt
- "Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
"Himself befooled, unable to propose
"Aught better than the fooling) — and but
care
- "For men, for the mere People then and
there, —
- "In these, could you but see that Good and
Ill
- "Claimed you alike! Whence rose their
claim but still
- "From Ill, as fruit of Ill? What else
could knit
- "You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from
it
- 30 "Were also free from you! Whose
happiness
- "Could be distinguished in this morning's
press
- "Of miseries? — the fool's who passed a
gibe
- "On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy
tribe,
- "Thou carriest green and yellow tokens
in
- "Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!"
- "Much hold on you that's obtained!
Nay mount
- "Yet higher — and upon men's own ac-
count
- "Must Evil stay: for, what is joy? — to
heave
- "Up one obstruction more, and common
leave
- "What was peculiar, by such act destroy 40
"Itself; a partial death is every joy;
- "The sensible escape, enfranchisement
- "Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed —
content,
- "The cramped — at large, the growing
circle — round,
- "All's to begin again — some novel bound
- "To break, some new enlargement to
entreat;
- "The sphere though larger is not more
complete.
- "Now for Mankind's experience: who
alone
- "Might style the unobstructed world his
own?"
- "Whom palled Goito with its perfect 50
things?"
- "Sordello's self: whereas for Mankind
springs
- "Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
- "They climb; life's view is not at once
disclosed
- "To creatures caught up, on the summit
left,
- "Heaven plain above them, yet of wings
bereft:
- "But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
- "So, range on range, the girdling forests
shoot
- "Twist your plain prospect and the
throngs who scale
- "Height after height, and pierce mists,
veil by veil,
- "Heartened with each discovery; in their 60
soul,
- "The Whole they seek by Parts — but,
found that Whole,
- "Could they revert, enjoy past gains?
The space
- "Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
- "The Parts were more than plenty, once
attained
- "The Whole, to quite exhaust it: nought
were gained
- "But leave to look — not leave to do:
Beneath
- "Soon sates the looker — look Above,
and Death
- "Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted.
Live
- "First, and die soon enough, Sordello!
Give
- "Body and spirit the first right they claim, 70
"And pasture soul on a voluptuous shame
- "That you, a pageant-city's denizen,
"Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard
men —

- "Can force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
 "Bright attributes away for sordid muc',
 "Yet manage from that very muck educe
 "Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to your cruce
 "The world's discardings! Though real ingots pay
 "Your pains, the clods that yielded them are clay
 "To all beside, — would clay remain, though quenched
 "Your purging-fire; who's robbed then? Had you wrenched
 "An ampler treasure forth! — As 'tis, they crave
 "A share that ruins you and will not save
 "Them. Why should sympathy command you quit
 "The course that makes your joy, nor will remit
 "Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse
 "The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
 "Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
 "The total be emancipate; men's road
 "Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
 "No enterprising soul's precocious start
 "Before the general march! If slow or fast
 "All straggle up to the same point at last,
 "Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,
 "The brakes at balm-shed,¹ asphodels in blow,
 "While they were landlocked? Speed their Then, but how
 "This badge would suffer you improve your Now!"
 His time of action for, against, or with Our world (I labour to extract the pith Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide, Gigantic with its power of joy, beside The world's eternity of impotence To profit though at his whole joy's expense.
 "Make nothing of my day because so brief?
 "Rather make more: instead of joy, use grief
 "Before its novelty have time subside!
 "Wait not for the late savour, leave untried
 "Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
 "Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
 "Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
 "All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
 "Upon this Now, which time may reason out
 "As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
 "But long ere then Sordello will have slept
 "Away; you teach him at Goito's crypt,
 "There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
 "Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
 "So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
 "Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
 "Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
 "The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed!
 "And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,
 "Contribute each his pang to make your 50 bliss,
 "'Tis but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl
 "Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
 "At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
 "And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe grape
 "Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
 "The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
 "Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
 "Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
 "And set me there to live? Oh life, life-breath,
 "Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life 60 ere death!
 "This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
 "But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique:
 "Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
 "Each height, then every depth profound-lier drops?
 "Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
 "For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
 "To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
 "The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
 "Perchance (so facile was the deed) she chequed
 "The void with these materials to affect 70
 "My soul diversely: these consigned anew
 "To nought by death, what marvel if she threw
 "A second and superber spectacle
 "Before me? What may serve for sun, what still
 "Wander a moon above me? What else wind
 "About me like the pleasures left behind,
 "And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
 "Cling to me? What's new laughter? Soothes the fresh

¹ Gums exuding from brushwood.

- "Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for
my sake
"In brave resource: but whether bids she
slake
"My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
"No draught worth lip save from some
rocky fount
"Above ^{is} the clouds, while here she's provident
"Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent
"Guards, with its face of reate and sedge,
nor fail
"The silver globules and gold-sparkling
grail
"At bottom? Oh, 'twere too absurd to
slight
10 "For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
"Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-
spring: wear
"Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
"Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest
heart
"Offer to serve, contented for my part
"To give life up in service, — only grant
"That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
"Aught further of me? If men cannot
choose
"But set aside life, why should I refuse
"The gift? I take it — I; for one, engage
20 "Never to falter through my pilgrimage —
"Nor end it howling that the stock or stone
"Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
"Will praise the world, you style mere
ante-room
"To palace — be it so! shall I assume
"— My foot the courtly gait, my tongue
the trope,
"My mouth the smirk, before the doors
fly ope
"One moment? What? with guarders
row on row,
"Gay swarms of varletry that come and
go,
"Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
30 "The plackets¹ of, pert claimants help
displace,
"Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, —
laugh
"At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
"Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder,
— why
"Admitted to the presence by and by,
"Should thought of having lost these make
me grieve
"Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?
"Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-
stone,²
"Are floor-work there! But do I let alone
"That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
40 "Once and for ever? — Floor-work?
No such fool!
- "Rather, were heaven to forestall earth,
I'd say
"I, is it, must be blest? Then, my own
way
"Bless me! Give firmer arm and fleetier
foot,
"I'll thank you: but to no mad wings
transmute
"These limbs of mine — our greensward
was so soft!
"Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
"We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
"Engines subservient, not mixed up with
us.
"Better move palpably through heaven:
nor, freed
"Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space
proceed
"Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in
heaven's marge
"Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his
targe
"Solid with stars — the Centaur at his
game,
"Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
"Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme
dull
"Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed,
at full,
"Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
"So oft a better life this life concealed,
"And which sage, champion, martyr,
through each path
"Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid
bath,
"The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
"Twas well for them; let me become
aware
"As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
"What masters life disclose itself! For-
get
"Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —
"I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
"So much is truth to me. What is, then?
Since
"One object, viewed diversely, may evince
"Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,
"That way repel, — why gloze upon the
fact?
"Why must a single of the sides be right?
"What bids choose this and leave the
opposite?
"Where's abstract Right for me? — in
youth endured
"With Right still present, still to be pur-
sued,
"Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
"Each with its proper law and mode of life,
"Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to
sway
"Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
"Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
"Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to
start

* Under-petticoats.

* Red bronze.

"Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
That some should pick the unstrung
jewels out —

"Each, well!"

And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary
states

Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain,
grove, glade,

And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dis-
solved,

So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break-up; the sudden
swell

Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one
sphere,

Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds
them cinct

Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill dis-
tinct,

Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —
Contrived to render easy, difficult,
This or the other course of . . . what new
bond

In place of flesh may stop their flight be-
yond

Its new sphere, as that course does harm or
good

To its arrangements. Once this under-
stood,

As suddenly he felt himself alone,
Quite out of Time and this world: all was
known.

What made the secret of his past despair?
— Most imminent when he seemed most
aware

Of his own self-sufficiency: made mad
By craving to expand the power he had,
And not new power to be expanded? —
just

This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wrecked
in Time

On Matter: let the Soul's attempt sublime
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplish-
ment,

And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing em-
ployed,

Fit to the finite his infinity.

And thus proceed for ever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy 50
here;

Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like. Now, of the present sphere we
call

Life, are conditions; take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self — had fain
conveyed

Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, — 60
Scarcely its minute for enjoying here, —
The soul must needs instruct her weak
compeer,

Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
Which, far from half discovered even, —
lo,

The minute gone, the body's power let go
Apportioned to that joy's acquirement!
Broke

Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it
woke —

From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds
hoist

Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the 70
moist

Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with
rain,

Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate

Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed
afford, —

The chord's might half discovered, what
should pluck

One string, his finger, was found palsy-
struck.

And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
A saddest sight — the body lost alone 80
Through her officious proffered help, de-
prived

Of this and that enjoyment Fate con-
trived, —

Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip
hence, —

Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
To stem the ruin even yet, protract

The body's term, supply the power it
lacked

From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping,
barred —

Advance the same, vanquished — obtain 90
reward,

- Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good
below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous
boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.
So much was plain then, proper in the
past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul
Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for,
each
10 Single sphere — Time. But does our
knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance
broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets
soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall
elapse
'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds
perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which
should
Have been enjoyed? — nay, might have
been and would,
Each purpose ordered right — the soul's
no whit
20 Beyond the body's purpose under it.
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a
bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they
mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die — would soul, proportioned thus,
begin
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalise
30 The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled
eyes
To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere — all and each quality
Save some sole and immutable Great,
Good
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its
hood
To follow? Never may some soul see All
— The Great Before and After, and the
Small
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest
lore
And take the single course prescribed
before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
40 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to
affect,
Nature has plied with all her means, from
trees
And flowers e'en to the Multitude! — and
these,
Decides he save or no? One word to end!
Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above you
still
Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —
What need! And of — none the minutest
duct
To that out-nature, nought that would in-
struct
And so let rivalry begin to live —
But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose but this last re-
vealed —
This Human clear, as that Divine con-
cealed —
What utter need!
What has Sordello found?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun? So,
says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst,
they met,
Though on a shifting waste of sand, men
set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello
found?
For they approach — approach — that
foot's rebound
Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold,
dash the veil
Aside — and you divine who sat there
dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he
spies
Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust,
turns there
With short quick passionate cry: as Palma
pressed
In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
It beat.
By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he
bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the man-
sion's lit,
God counselled for. As easy guess the
word
That passed betwixt them, and become the
third
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax

- More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,
 Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute
 As his contemporaneous friends professed;
 Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
 Known by each neighbour, and allowed for, let
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
 Men who would miss their boyhood's bugbear: "trap"
- 10 "The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
 "A battered pinion!" — was the word.
 In fine,
 One flap too much and Venice's marine
 Was meddled with; no overlooking that!
 She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
 Than force, to speak the truth; there's slender laud
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
 To pull his death on such a man; fate shears
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine thread
- 20 You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,
 The old-smite, your assurance all went well
 With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
 Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
 For the shame done his eighty years — (apart
 The principle, none found it in his heart
 To be much angry with Taurello) — gained
 Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
 But carry him to Venice for a show?
- 30 — Set him, as 'twere, down gently — free to go
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
 To point their children the Magnifico,
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
 His gait among them now — "it took, indeed,
 "Fully this Ecelin to supersede
 "That man," remarked the seniors.
 Singular!
- 40 Sordello's inability to bar
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
 About by his strange disbelief that aught
 Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain
 Under Taurello's tutelage, — whom, brain
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
- Indissolubly bound to baffle God
 Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
 And massy-muscl'd big-boned Alberic (Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
 To demonstration — prove wherever's will
 To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill
 Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,
 They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand
 (So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
 And saving Milan win the world's applause.
 Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
 Saw his exasperated captors burn
 Seven children and their mother; then, regaled
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
 To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take
 God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
 Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll —
 The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
 The modern church beneath, — no harm in that!
- Chirrup the contumacious grasshopper,
 Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre
 Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard
 Only five years ago. He added, "June's
 "The month for carding off our first cocoons
 "The silkworms fabricate" — a double news,
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. 80
 Choose!
 And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!
 Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts!
 Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
 Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
 More and more gorgeous — ever that face there
 The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care

As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
— A transient struggle, haply a painful
sense

Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration — not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put
back!

Is there no more to say? He of the
rhymes —

Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved —
Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never
dumb

In praise of him: while what he should
have been,

Could be, and was not — the one step too
mean

For him to take, — we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's
sake:

He did much — but Sordello's chance was
gone.

Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed: 'twas a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
— As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he
dozed

Really at home — one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he
had,

Because that way assured they were not
worth

Doing, so spared from doing them hence-
forth —

A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced

Their cause then, men had plucked Hes-
perian fruit

And, praising that, just thrown him in to
boot

All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce

Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing? this

way. —

Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,

Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See! the sun's 50

On the square castle's inner-court's low
wall

Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers; and

through the haze
(Save where some slender patches of grey
maize

Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-

frost

Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
Up and up goes he, singing all the while

Some unintelligible words to beat
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet, 60

So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
"Stained like pale honey oozed from top-

most rocks

"Sun-blanced the livelong summer," —
all that's left

Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect

He sleeps, the feverish poet — I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,

Wake up! The ghost's gone, and the
story ends

I'd fain hope, sweetly; seeing, peri or
ghoul,

That spirits are conjectured fair or foul, 70

Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink

Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye
snuff

Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!
Merely the savour's rareness; any nose

May ravage with impunity a rose:
Rife a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours!

I'd tell you that same pungency ensures
An after-gust, but that were overbold.

Who would has heard Sordello's story told. 80

PIPPA PASSES;

A DRAMA.

1841.

[This drama is hinged on the chance appearance of Pippa, a poor child, at work all the year round (save one day) at the silk-mills at Asolo, in Northern Italy, at critical moments in the spiritual life history of the leading characters in the play. Just when their emotions, passions, motives are swinging backwards and forwards Pippa passes by singing some refrain, and her voice determines the actions and fashions the destinies of men and women to whom she was unknown. It is a play of much simplicity, as well as rare charm and beauty.]

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD

R. B.

LONDON: 1841.

PIPPA PASSES.

PERSONS.

PIPPA.
OTTIMA.
SEBALD.
Foreign Students:
GOTTLIEB.
SCHRAMM.
JULES.
PHENE.
Austrian Police.
BLUPHOCKS.
LUIGI and his Mother.
Poor Girls.
MONSIGNOR and his Attendants.

INTRODUCTION.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE
TREVISAN.

SCENE. — *A large mean airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the Silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurning and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray

Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
— My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good —
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood —
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,

And free to let alone what thou refusest;
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
 Me, who am only Pippa, — old-year's sor-
 row,
 Cast off last night, will come again to-
 morrow:
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall bor-
 row
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's
 sorrow.
 All other men and women that this earth
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
 Get more joy one way, if another, less:
 Thou art my single day, God lends to
 heaven
 What were all earth else, with a feel of
 heaven, —
 Sole light that helps me through the year,
 thy sun's!
 Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest
 Ones —
 And let thy morning rain on that superb
 Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
 Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy
 rain
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-
 pane,
 He will but press the closer, breathe more
 warm
 Against her cheek; how should she mind
 the storm?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a
 gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene, — what care bride
 and groom
 Save for their dear selves? 'Tis their
 marriage-day;
 And while they leave church and go home
 their way,
 Hand clasping hand, within each breast
 would be
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of
 thee.
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist, — will Luigi and his mother
 grieve —
 The lady and her child, unmatched, for-
 sooth,
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 For true content? The cheerful town,
 warm, close
 And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
 Receives them. And yet once again, out-
 break
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
 Such stir about, — whom they expect from
 Rome
 To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
 And say here masses proper to release
 A soul from pain, — what storm dares hurt
 his peace?
 Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts
 to ward

Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' 40
 guard.
 But Pippa — just one such mischance
 would spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelve-
 month's toil
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
 And here I let time slip for nought!
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
 With a single splash from my ewer!
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits 50
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing:
 Now grow together on the ceiling!
 That will task your wits.
 Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped
 to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant crip-
 ple?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon? 60
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Foul
 bird's poit!
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the
 ripple
 Of ocean, bud there, — fairies watch un-
 roll
 Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps
 disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk green
 universe!
 I am queen of thee, floweret!
 And each fleshy blossom
 Preserve I not — (safer
 Than leaves that embower it, 70
 Or shells that embosom)
 From weevil and chafer?
 Laugh through my pane then; solicit the
 bee;
 Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy
 glee,
 Love thy queen, worship me!
 — Worship whom else? For am I not,
 this day,
 Whate'er I please? What shall I please
 to-day?
 My morn, noon, eve and night — how spend
 my day?
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds
 silk,
 The whole year round, to earn just bread 80
 and milk:
 But, this one day, I have leave to go.
 And play out my fancy's fullest games;
 I may fancy all day — and it shall be so —

• A Lily with purple flowers.

That I taste of the pleasures, am called by
the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the
morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls
love:

I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house
above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in
front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is
wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door
uncloses,

I . . . what now? — give abundant cause
for prate

About me — Ottima, I mean — of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face
down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!

But love, love, love — there's better love,
I know!

This foolish love was only day's first offer:
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally

20 Out of Possagno church at noon?

Their house looks over Orcana valley:

Why should not I be the bride as soon

As Ottima? For I saw, beside,

Arrive last night that little bride —

Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash

Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black
bright tresses,

Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!

— So strict was she, the veil

30 Should cover close her pale

Pure cheeks — a bride to look at and scarce
touch,

Scarce touch, remember, Jules! For are
not such

Used to be tended, flower-like, every fea-
ture,

As if one's breath would fray the lily of a
creature?

A soft and easy life these ladies lead:

Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.

Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,

Keep that foot its lady primness,

Let those ankles never swerve

40 From their exquisite reserve,

Yet have to trip along the streets like me,

All but naked to the knee!

How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss

So startling as her real first infant kiss?

Oh, no — not envy, this!

— Not envy, sure! — for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,

In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?

Mine should have lapped me round from
the beginning;

As little fear of losing it as winning:

Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their
wives,

And only parents' love can last our lives.

At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what pre-
vents

My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to
bird —

(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
friends)

— Let me be cared about, kept out of
harm,

And schemed for, safe in love as with a
charm;

Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face — my father,
too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love
befall

Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor? — who to-night will bless the
home

Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which
mildly burn

With love for all men! I, to-right at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait! — even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's
hymn declare?

What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:

If now, as formerly he trod

Paradise, his presence fills

Our earth, each only as God wills

Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,

Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call

A "great event," should come to pass,

Than that? Untwine me from the mass

Of deeds which make up life, one deed

Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it! — oh yes —
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none — being just as great, no
doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!

A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
— With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse —
No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*]

I. — MORNING.

SCENE. — *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house. LUCA's wife, OTTIMA, and her paramour, the German SEBALD.*

Sebald [sings].

*Let the watching lids wink!
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!
Deep into the night, drink!*

Ottima. Night? Such may be your
Rhineland nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
— We call such light, the morning: let us see!
How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame! — Nay, do I bid you?
— *Sebald,*
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Miss and be friends, my *Sebald*! Is't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be.
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
In mornings through the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the
brook,
And drove the slow white oxen up the
hills:
But no, your house was mute, would open
no eye.
And wisely: you were plotting one thing
there,
Future, another outside. I looked up —
Through white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Sent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Ah, I remember! — and the peasants
laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the
young wife."

This house was his, this chair, this window
— his.

Ottima. Ah, the clear morning! I can
see St. Mark's;

That black streak is the belfry. Stop:
Vicenza

Should lie . . . there's Padua, plain
enough, that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!
Sebald. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where's dew, where's freshness? That
bruised plant, I bruised

In getting through the lattice yestereve, 40
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's
mark

I' the dust o' the sill.

Ottima. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Sebald. Let me lean out. I cannot scent
blood here,

Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, *Ottima*? There,
curse

The world and all outside! Let us throw
off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?
Let's out

With all of it.

Ottima. Best never speak of it.

Sebald. Best speak again and yet again
of it,

Till words cease to be more than words. 50
"His blood,"

For instance — let those two words mean
"His blood"

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them
now,

"His blood."

Ottima. Assuredly if I repented

The deed —

Sebald. Repent? Who should repent,
or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once
say

That I repented?

Ottima. No, I said the deed . . .

Sebald. "The deed" and "the event"
— just now it was

"Our passion's fruit" — the devil take
such cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . . 60

Ottima. Here's the wine;

I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too — wine of both sorts.

Black? White then?

Sebald. But am not I his cut-throat?
What are you?

Ottima. There trudges on his business
from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at
church,

Close under the stone wall by the south
entry

I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass — at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on
me,

I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chillily does it strike.
This, Sebald?

Sebald. No, the white wine — the
white wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
10 Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your
black eyes!

Do you remember last damned New Year's
day?

Ottima. You brought those foreign
prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but
saying

His own set wants the proof-mark, roused
him up

To hunt them out.

Sebald. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.

Ottima. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your
life

20 For that, my Sebald?

Sebald. Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We'll not
make much

One of the other — that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now
first,

To show I love you — yes, still love you —
love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him
— Sure sign we had him ever in our
thoughts,

White sneering old reproachful face and all!

30 We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this: conceive you?

Ottima. Love!

Sebald. Not tied so sure.
Because though I was wrought upon, have
struck

His insolence back into him — am I
So surely yours? — therefore for ever yours?

Ottima. Love, to be wise, (one counsel
pays another)

Should we have — months ago, when first
we loved,

For instance that May morning we two
stole

40 Under the green ascent of sycamores —
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Sebald. "A thing" there again —
"a thing!"

Ottima. Then, Venus' body, had we
come upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered
corpse

Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close —

Would you have pored upon it? Why per-
sist

In poring now upon it? For 'tis here
As much as there in the deserted house:

You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .

Dare you stay here? I would go back and —
hold

His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you
worse,

"Luca, than . . ."

Sebald. Off, off — take your
hands off mine,

'Tis the hot evening — off! oh, morning
is it?

Ottima. There's one thing must be
done; you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-
night.

Sebald. What would come, think you,
if we let him lie

Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this

Off from his face beside, as you will see.

Ottima. This dusty pane might serve
for looking glass.

Three, four — four grey hairs! Is it so
you said

A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No — this way.

Sebald. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts
of yours,

That this were undone! Killing! Kill
the world

So Luca lives again! — ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you — yes, and feign

Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Ottima. See!

Sebald. No, I'll finish. Do
you think

I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine

To suffer; there's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:

What is one young for, else? In age we'll
sigh

O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown
over;

Still, we have lived: the vice was in its
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have word

His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse —

Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me

These flowers to smell!

Ottima. My poor lost friend!

Sebald. He gave me life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more —
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:

Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?

Could he do less than make pretence to strike?

'Tis not the crime's sake — I'd commit ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!

And you — O how feel you? Feel you for me?

Ottima. Well then, I love you better now than ever,

And best (look at me while I speak to you)
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,

Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours

May not now be looked over: look it down!

Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,

Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!

Speak not! The past, would you give up the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?

The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,

And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing.

Who stammered — "Yes, I love you?"

Sebald. And I drew back; put far back your face with both my hands

Lest you should grow too full of me — your face

So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Ottima. And when I ventured to receive you here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings —

Sebald. When I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,

Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread

To a yellow haze?

Ottima. Ah — my sign was, the sun

Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree 40
Nipped by the first frost.

Sebald. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.

Ottima. Then our crowning night!

Sebald. The July night?

Ottima. The day of it too, Sebald!

When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed
with heat,

Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to

each,

And smother up all life except our life.

So lay we till the storm came.

Sebald. How it came!

Ottima. Buried in woods we lay, you 50
recollect;

Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft

Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here
burned and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close wood
screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at a
venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead —

Sebald. Yes!

Ottima. — While I stretched myself
upon you, hands

To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth,
and shook

All my locks loose, and covered you with 60
them —

You, Sebald, the same you!

Sebald. Slower, Ottima!

Ottima. And as we lay —

Sebald. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words,

to heart!

Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe
slow, speak slow!

Do not lean on me!

Ottima. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,

Who said, "Let death come now! 'Tis
right to die!

"Right to be punished! Nought com-
pletes such bliss

"But woe!" Who said that?

Sebald. How did we ever rise?
Wasn't that we slept? Why did it end? 70

Ottima. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends

Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid
lips.

My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Sebald. I kiss you now, dear Ottima,
now and now!

This way? Will you forgive me — be
once more

My great queen?

Ottima. Bind it thrice about my brow;

Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Sebald. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice
of PIPPA, singing—

*The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!*

[PIPPA passes.

Sebald. God's in his heaven! Do you
hear that? Who spoke?

You, you spoke!

Ottima. Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give
them

But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their in-
side?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
to She stoops to pick my double heartsease
. . . Sh!

She does not hear: call you out louder!

Sebald. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those
shoulders!

Ottima. *Sebald?*
Sebald. Wipe off that paint! I hate
you.

Ottima. Miserable!
Sebald. My God, and she is emptied of
it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange
grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it
likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
to Stay in their places: and the very hair.
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!

Ottima. Speak to me—not of me.
Sebald. That round great full-orbed
face, where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

Ottima. To me—not of me! Un-
grateful, perjured cheat!

A coward too: but ingrate's worse than all.
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing
lie!

Leave me! Betray me! I can see your
drift!

A lie that walks and eats and drinks?

Sebald. My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-
blades—

I should have known there was no blood
beneath!

Ottima. You hate me then? You hate
me then?

Sebald. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done, 40
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit
thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his
heaven!

Ottima. —Me!
Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill
me!

Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me
—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear
me speak!

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast;
don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my 50
own

Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths
presently!

Sebald. My brain is drowned now—
quite drowned: all I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go—whirls from a black fiery
sea!

Ottima. Not me—to him, O God, be
merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the hill-side to Orcana. For-
eign Students of painting and sculp-
ture, from Venice, assembled opposite
the house of JULES, a young French
statuary, at Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention! My own post is
beneath this window, but the pomegran-
ate clump yonder will hide three or four of
you with a little squeezing, and Schramm
and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony.
Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want
everybody, for Jules must not be suffered
to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Student. All here! Only our poet's
away—never having much meant to be
present, moonstrike him! The airs of that

fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it, — when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me, — “*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fowled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly. — *Asculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe’s plaster — One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus’ emulsion — One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury’s bolus — One box Cures . . .*

3rd Student. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o’clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Student. Good! — only, so should the poet’s muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Student. To the point now. Where’s Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh, — listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman — the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche — but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again — oh, alone indubitably! — to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers! — so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off — what do folks style it? — the bloom of his life.

Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his — I can’t laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Student. That’s the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning:

there’s no doubt he loves the girl — loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gottlieb. See here! “He has been accused,” he writes, “to have Canova’s women about him, in stone, and the world’s women beside him, in flesh; these 70
“being as much below, as those above, his soul’s aspiration: but now he is to have “the reality.” There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Student. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom — it drops presently, having done its service 80
and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom’s place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with — as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body’s eye 90
or the mind’s, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women? — there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men? — there’s God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . . 100

1st Student. Put Schramm’s pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble — oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova’s gallery — you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla* — cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement — “In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich — I see you!” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into — I say, into — the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova’s practice was a certain method of 110
using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint — and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova — whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Student. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

- 1st Student. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek — real
- 10 Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss" — Schramm knows! — white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest, — a daughter of Natalia, so she swears, — that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter — somebody had seen his
- 20 Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere — would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Venice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms — the pale cheeks, the black hair — whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained
- 30 her name, too — Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way — secrecy must be observed — in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only
- 40 speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St — st — Here they come!
- 6th Student. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!
- 5th Student. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm, — patted down over the left temple, — like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the
- 50 marble in.
- 2nd Student. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy! — rich, that your face may the better set it off.
- 6th Student. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!
- Gottlieb. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?
- 1st Student. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.
- 60 6th Student. She does not speak — has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her

lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gottlieb. How he gazes on her! Pity — pity!

1st Student. They go in: now, silence! You three, — not nearer the window, mind, 70 than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II. — NOON.

SCENE. — *Over Orcana. The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins —*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here — My work-room's single seat. I over-lean This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin — no, last your throat turns: 'tis 80
their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look
ever
This one way till I change, grow you — I
could
Change into you, beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank
God!
I have spoken: speak you!

O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that's there in
clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the
room?
Where must I place you? When I think
that once
This room-full of rough block-work 90
seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by
trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their
truth —
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first,
See, all your letters! Was't not well con-
trived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she
keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops 100
out foremost?

Ah, — this that swam down like a first
moonbeam
Into my world!

Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity; yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station,
pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must
destroy!

What gaze you at? Those? Books, I
told you of;

Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe —
Read this line . . . no, shame — Homer's
be the Greek

First breathed me from the lips of my
Greek girl!

This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page
and page,

To mark great places with due gratitude;
"He said, and on Antinous directed
"A bitter shaft" . . . a flower blots out
the rest!

Again upon your search? My statues,
then!

— Ah, do not mind that — better that will
look

When cast in bronze — an Almaign Kaiser,
that,

Swart-green and gold, with truncheon
based on hip.

This, rather, turn to! What, unrecog-
nised?

I thought you would have seen that here
you sit

As I imagined you, — Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold
relief" —

So you commanded — "carve, against I
come,

"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-
branch.

"Praise those who slew Hipparchus!
cry the guests,

"While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle
waves

"As erst above our champion: stand up,
all!"

See, I have laboured to express your
thought.

Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and
arms,

(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all
sides,

Only consenting at the branch's end

They strain toward) serves for frame to a
sole face,

The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of
wine

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor
crowns cast off,

Violet and parsley crowns to trample on —
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts ap-
prove,

Devoutly their unconquerable hymn. 50
But you must say a "well" to that — say
"well!"

Because you gaze — am I fantastic,
sweet?

Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble —
marbly

Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself

To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:

With me, each substance tended to one
form

Of beauty — to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs 60
Of that — the tree, the flower — or take
the fruit, —

Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy
limbs,

Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad
sprang.

But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!

From the soft-rinded smoothening facile
chalk

That yields your outline to the air's
embrace,

Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom; 70
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble! — 'neath
my tools

More pliable than jelly — as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from
depths

In the earth's heart, where itself breeds
itself,

And whence all baser substance may be
worked;

Refine it off to air, you may, — condense it
Down to the diamond; — is not metal
there,

When o'er the sudden speck my chisel 80
trips?

— Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale,
approach,

Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where,

surprised

By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?

Phene? what — why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still dilating
eyes!
Ah, you will die — I knew that you would
die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained
silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need
I speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to
mind

One-half of it, beside; and do not care
10 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you — what are you? — if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends, — it is to keep
myself

Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that —
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we
are:

Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!

20 If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me, — I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the
earth

Whence all that's low comes, and there
touch and stay

— Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is
myself,

Not me the shame and suffering; but they
sink,

Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
30 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering — altered! Stay — "I love
you, love" . . .

I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was't in the
tone

Or the words, your power?

Or stay — I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only
change

No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled
up.

Natalia threatened me that harm should
follow

Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,

40 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not
you.

Your friends, — Natalia said they were
your friends

And meant you well, — because, I doubted
it,

Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to
bear,

But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used
that smile,

That hateful smirk of boundless self-con-
ceit

Which seems to take possession of the
world

And make of God a tame confederate, 50
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you
know!

But still Natalia said they were your
friends,

And they assented though they smiled the
more,

And all came round me, — that thin
Englishman

With light lank hair seemed leader of the
rest;

He held a paper — "What we want," said
he,

Ending some explanation to his friends —
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his
taste

"And lure him on until, at innermost 60
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may
find — this!

"— As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
"And brushed aside as soon, but this is
found

"Only when on the lips or loathing
tongue."

And so he read what I have got by heart:
I'll speak it, — "Do not die, love! I am
yours."

No — is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to
lose

What cost such pains to learn! Is this 70
more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint;
In my brain, as poor a creature too:
No end to all I cannot do!
Yet do one thing at least I can —
Love a man or hate a man
Supremely: thus my lore began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In the loveliest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched 80
my tent,*

*I found Hate dwelling beside.
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the
painter meant,*

Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone,
couched Love
Where the shadow threecfold fell.
(The meaning — those black bride's-
eyes above,
Not a painter's lip should tell!)

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,

"You have black eyes, Love, — you are, sure enough,

"My peerless bride, — then do you tell indeed

"What needs some explanation! What means this?"

— And I am to go on, without a word —

So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
Once, when I loved, I would entace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and
face

Of her I loved, in one embrace —
As if by mere love I could love im-
mensely!

Once, when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first
lunge

My Joe's whole life out like a sponge —
As if by mere hate I could hate in-
tensely!

But now I am wiser, know better the
fashion

How passion seeks aid from its oppo-
site passion:

And if I see cause to love more, hate
more

Than ever man loved, ever hated
before —

And seek in the Valley of Love,
The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Heat of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove, —
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.

When I Love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron
casque,

Hate grins through Love's rose-
braided mask, —

And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick —
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered
straight

By thy bride — how the painter
Lutwyche can hate!

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,

Hated me: they at Venice — presently Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:

If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep
 What's here, the gold — we cannot meet so again,

Consider! and the money was but meant For two years' travel, which is over now, All chance or hope or care or need of it.

This — and what comes from selling these, my casts

And books and medals, except . . . let them go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them, We might meet somewhere, since the world 60 is wide.

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing —

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When — where —

How — can this arm establish her
above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to externally reprove
me?

("Hist!" — said Kate the Queen;
 But "Oh!" — cried the maiden,
 binding her tresses,

"'Tis only a page that carols unseen,
 "Crumbling your hounds their
 messes!")

Is she wronged? — To the rescue of 70
her honour,

My heart!
Is she poor? — What costs it to be-
styled a donor?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all
this upon her!

("Nay, list!" — bade Kate the Queen;

And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'Tis only a page that carols unseen
 "Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA passes

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who re- 80 nounced

Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!
Sebald. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

*[From without is heard the voice
of PIPPA, singing —*

*The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven —
All's right with the world!*

[PIPPA passes.

Sebald. God's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who spoke?

You, you spoke!

Ottima. Oh — that little ragged girl! She must have rested on the step: we give them

But this one holiday the whole year round. Did you ever see our silk-mills — their inside?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
to She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!

She does not hear: call you out louder!

Sebald. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on — dress those shoulders!

Ottima. *Sebald?*

Sebald. Wipe off that paint! I hate you.

Ottima. Miserable!

Sebald. My God, and she is emptied of it now!

Outright now! — how miraculously gone All of the grace — had she not strange grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
to Stay in their places: and the very hair
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!

Ottima. Speak to me — not of me.

Sebald. That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence — all broken!

Ottima. To me — not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!

A coward too: but ingrate's worse than all.
Beggar — my slave — a fawning, cringing lie!

Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!

A lie that walks and eats and drinks?

Sebald. My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades —

I should have known there was no blood beneath!

Ottima. You hate me then? You hate me then?

Sebald. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior — guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments — let the world take credit
thence —

I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate — curse you! God's in his heaven!

Ottima. — Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself — kill me!

Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me — then

Yourself — then — presently — first hear me speak!

I always meant to kill myself — wait, you!
Lean on my breast — not as a breast;
don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

Sebald. My brain is drowned now — quite drowned: all I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go — whirls from a black fiery sea!

Ottima. Not me — to him, O God, be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the hill-side to Orcana. Foreign
Students of painting and sculpture,
from Venice, assembled opposite
the house of JULES, a young French
statuary, at Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five — who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Student. All here! Only our poet's away — never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that

Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of — Stolen Goods! So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge — mean to live so — and die — *As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Helward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant — I possess a burning pocketful of *swanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1st Policeman. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Policeman. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluphocks. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa — that is, short for Felippa — rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa — Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Policeman. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *swanziger*! Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3rd Policeman. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Policeman. Flourish all round — "Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end — "Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom — "Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side (which is the case here) — "Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna — well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night — there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are

correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III. — EVENING.

SCENE. — *Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.* LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear 70
a long sigh, easing

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no — in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my neel as I leaped
up!

Hark — "Lucius Junius!" The very
ghost of a voice

Whose body is caught and kept by . . .
what are those?

Mere withered wallflowers, waving over-
head?

They seem an elvish group with thin
bleached hair

That lean out of their topmost fortress. —
look

And listen, mountain men, to what we say, 80
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.
Up and show faces all of you! — "All of
you!"

That's the king dwarf with the scarlet
comb; old Franz,

Come down and meet your fate? Hark —
"Meet your fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my
Luigi — do not

Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:

Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for 90
effect, I say.

Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him — me — and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and
failed,

I could not teach that: mine's the lesser
task.

Mother. They visit night by night . . .

Mother. — You, Luigi?

Ah, will you let me tell you what you are? 100

- Luigi.* Why not? Oh, the one thing
you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times — nay, even as
now
We sit — I think my mind is touched,
suspect
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus — so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I
walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
10 Were suffering; then I ponder — “I am
rich,
“Young, healthy; why should this fact
trouble me,
“More than it troubles these?” But it
does trouble.
No, trouble’s a bad word: for as I walk
There’s springing and melody and giddi-
ness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my
youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me — whatever may amuse me:
And earth seems in a truce with me, and
heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their
strife,
20 The very cicala laughs “There goes he,
and there!
“Feast him, the time is short; he is on his
way
“For the world’s sake: feast him this
once, our friend!”
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!
Mother. But mistrust yourself —
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on
him!
Luigi. Oh, there I feel — am sure that
I am right!
Mother. Mistrust your judgment then,
of the mere means
To this wild enterprise. Say, you are
right, —
30 How should one in your state e’er bring to
pass
What would require a cool head, a cold
heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.
Luigi. Escape? To even wish that,
would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o’er
with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?
40 I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
- God must be glad one loves his world so
much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me: — last year’s sunsets, and
great stars
Which had a right to come first and see
ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun
away —
Those crescent moons with notched and
burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and
there stood,
Impatient of the azure — and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the
storm —
May’s warm slow yellow moonlit summer
nights —
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!
Mother. (He will not go!)
Luigi. You smile at me?
’Tis true, —
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath
The rose festoons, goats’ horns, and oxen’s
skulls.
Mother. See now: you reach the city,
you must cross
His threshold — how?
Luigi. Oh, that’s if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you
guess —
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and
yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice
yonder
In search of a distorted ash? — I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect
bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned
man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed
up —
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march — for you may watch
your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to
betray you;
More than one man spoils everything.
March straight —
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate and walk (not saunter)
on
Thro’ guards and guards — I have re-
hearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.

Don't ask the way of whom you meet,
observe!
But where they cluster thickest is the
door
Of doors; they'll let you pass — they'll
never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the
favourite,
Whence he is bound and what's his busi-
ness now.
Walk in — straight up to him; you have
no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,
out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!
You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I
could dream
o They got about me — Andrea from his
exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his
grave!
Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems
this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself — and next,
the world —
If he must love beyond, — but nought
between:
As a short-sighted man sees nought mid-
way
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with
love:
o I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him! —
then go!
Luigi. Now do you try me, or make
sport of me?
How first the Austrians got these pro-
vinces . . .
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
— Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .
Mother. Well?
Luigi. (Sure, he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo: spring's his confi-
dant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . . better go at once to modern time,
o He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I
understand
But can't restate the matter; that's my
boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and
prove
Things they have made me feel.
Mother. Why go to-night?
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!
Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-
star," saith God —
And, "to such an one I give the morning-
star."

The gift of the morning-star! Have I
God's gift
Of the morning-star?
Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June. 40
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those
who live through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all
glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.
Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her
coming.
Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?
Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown — with her blue eyes
upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes. 50
Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!
[From without is heard the
voice of PIPPA, singing —
*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than
now.
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn
and horn
Of some sacrificial bull —
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood, 60
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The gods so loved him while he
dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there
seemed
No need the king should ever die.
Luigi. No need that sort of king should
ever die!
*Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one 70
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes hung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows: 80
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch
brought,**

*Who through some chink had pushed
and pressed*

*On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple, — caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to
catch!*

*These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

10 *Luigi. That king should still judge
sitting in the sun!*

*His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up, — but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
'Tis said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge away;
But when he saw the sweepy hair*

20 *Girl with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing
bare*

*In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch
lights,*

*At his wondrous forest rites, —
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world
began!* [PIPPA passes.

*Luigi. And such grace have they, now
that the world ends!*

30 *The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,*

*Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach?*

*'Tis God's voice calls: how could I stay?
Farewell!*

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Turret to the Bishop's
Brother's House, close to the Duomo
S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the
steps.*

*1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice
— the stout seafarer!*

*Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for
wings.*

Let us all wish; you wish first!

2nd Girl. I? This sunset

To finish.

3rd Girl. That old — somebody I know,

40 *Greyer and older than my grandfather,*

*To give me the same treat he gave last
week —*

*Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and
mumbling*

*The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:*

*Since had he not himself been late this
morning*

*Detained at — never mind where, — had
he not . . .*

"Eh, baggage, had I not!" —

2nd Girl. How she can lie!

3rd Girl. Look there — by the nails!

2nd Girl. What

makes your fingers red!

*3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to
write bad words with*

On the bright table: how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn.

*Spring's come and summer's coming. I
would wear*

*A long loose gown, down to the feet and
hands,*

*With plaits here, close about the throat,
all day;*

*And all night lie, the cool long nights, in
bed;*

*And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .*

ah, I should say,

This is away in the fields — miles!

3rd Girl. Say at once

*You'd be at home: she'd always be at
home!*

*Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April
snowed*

*White blossoms on her as she ran. Why,
fool,*

*They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how
tall you were,*

*Twisted your starling's neck, broken his
cage,*

Made a dung-hill of your garden!

1st Girl.

They, destroy

*My garden since I left them? well —
perhaps!*

*I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;*

*They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was
born:*

*Cric — cric — I think I hear the wasps
o'erhead*

*Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time — coarse*

long papers,

*And the wasps eat them, prick them
through and through.*

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches!

Where was I? — before

*She broke in with her wishes and long
gowns*

And wasps — would I be such a fool! —
Oh, here!

This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of
him —

(If you say, "you love him" — straight
"he'll not be gulled!")

"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high — had eyes like yours, or hair
like yours,

"Brown, red, white," — as the case may
be: that pleases!

See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and,
there —

Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at
least!

1st Girl. When I was young, they said
if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day
nor next.

2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor
are you young, that's true.

How your plump arms, that were, have
dropped away!

Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you
still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour — any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black: the men say they are sick of
black,

Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to
slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that
Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window, —
quick, —

Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or
she would sing,

For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!

Then, if she listens and comes close . . .
I'll tell you, —

Sing that song the young English noble
made,

Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you —
what fun!

2nd Girl [sings].

You'll love me yet! — and I can tarry

Your love's protracted growing:

June reared that bunch of flowers you
carry,

From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfelt now: some seed

At least is sure to strike,

And yield — what you'll not pluck in- 40
deed,

Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,

A grave's one violet:

Your look? — that pays a thousand
pains.

What's death? You'll love me yet!

3rd Girl [to PIPPA who approaches]. Oh,
you may come closer — we shall not eat
you! Why, you seem the very person that
the great rich handsome Englishman has
fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell 50
you all about it.

IV. — NIGHT.

SCENE. — *Inside the Palace by the Duomo.*
MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

Monsignor. Thanks, friends, many
thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I
may recompense every one of you. Most
I know something of already. What, a
repat prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur*
. . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as
you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is
mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I
am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your 60
Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full
summer at Messina, as we priests used to
cross in procession the great square on
Assumption Day, you might see our thick-
est yellow tapers twist suddenly in two,
each like a falling star, or sink down on
themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my
friends, but go! [To the Intendant.] Not
you, Ugo! [The others leave the apart-
ment.] I have long wanted to converse 70
with you, Ugo.

Intendant. Uguccio —

Monsignor. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man!
of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno; —
what I do need instructing about, are these
accounts of your administration of my poor
brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get
through a third part of your accounts:
take some of these dainties before we
attempt it, however. Are you bashful 84
to that degree? For me, a crust and water
suffice.

Intendant. Do you choose this especial
night to question me?

Monsignor. This night, Ugo. You
have managed my late brother's affairs
since the death of our elder brother:
fourteen years and a month, all but three
days. On the Third of December, I find
him . . .

Intendant. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Monsignor. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh, — nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk
10 of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter, "He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a
10 chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn
30 painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics," — strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Intendant. Is Correggio a painter?

Monsignor. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may — probably will — fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a
40 musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Intendant. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one, — next
50 you thin it gradually, — always retaining me with your smile, — and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter, end now: what is it you want with me?

Monsignor. Ugo!

Intendant. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers — why your brother should
60 have given me this villa, that *podere*, and your nod at the end meant, — what?

Monsignor. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo! —

Intendant. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him — ask me!

Monsignor. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo 70 of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Intendant. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Monsignor. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out 80 my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul! — I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were, — what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled 90 them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only, — for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not 10 one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw, — am I therefore to let you, the
110 offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *podere* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No — if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Intendant. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me? 12

Monsignor. — Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Intendant. "Forgive us our trespasses?"

Monsignor. My friend, it is because I

avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning? — I? — who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Intendant. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Monsignor. 1, 2 — No. 3! — ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother — that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Intendant. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce — as you say — howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Monsignor. Liar!

Intendant. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his convivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop — you!

Monsignor. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however — seven times sifted.

Intendant. And how my absurd riches

encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you — the girl — here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak — know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day — saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither — have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive — no, that's not it — assent I do not say — but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague for you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled! — you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing —

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;*

There was nought above me, nought below;

*My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
— Ay, and of beasts, — but words, our words,*

*Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.*

*But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,*

*Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;*

And just when out of her soft fifty changes

No unfamiliar face might overlook me —

Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA passes.]

Monsignor [springing up]. My people — one and all — all — within there! Gag

this villain — tie him hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares — but remove him — quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick, I say!

SCENE. — PIPPA'S chamber again. She enters it.

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-
worm, I pray,
10 How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
"Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze" —
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small
feet shoes
20 "More like" . . . (what said she?) —
"and less like canoes!"
How pert that girl was! — would I be
those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done
me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest
upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills — none with blue eyes and
thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
30 We shall do better, see what next year
brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next
year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught
the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden
clatter
Above us — bound to spoil such idle
chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but — ah but, all the same,
40 No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While — not the worst of people's doings
scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to
spare!

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind!
for

I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi! — how that Luigi
started

Out of the turret — doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another, 50
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I? — tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New Year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content. 60

Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up — here's a friend I've plucked
you:

Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now! 70
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers —
"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
"I have made her gorge polenta
"Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
"As her . . . name there's no pronounc-
ing!
"See this heightened colour too,
"For she swilled Breganze wine
"Till her nose turned deep carmine; 80
"Twas but white when wild she grew.
"And only by this Zanze's eyes
"Of which we could not change the size,
"The magnitude of all achieved
"Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black
cloud?

Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's. 90
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the
woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cows and twats, 100
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,

Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really know:

How near I ever might approach all these I only fancied being, this long day:

— Approach, I mean, so as to touch them,
so

As to . . . in some way . . . move them
— if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.

For instance, if I wind

Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.]

o And border Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when
I rose!

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.]

God bless me! I can pray no more to-
night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say
right.

All service ranks the same with God —

*With God, whose puppets, best and
worst,*

Are we: there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.]

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES;

A TRAGEDY.

1842.

[Victor Amadeus II., originally Duke of Savoy, obtained the title of King of Sardinia in 1720. He was a powerful and self-willed man, and a sagacious sovereign. Saddened by the death of his eldest and favourite son, and of his daughter, the Queen of Spain, he began to meditate abdication in favour of his son Charles. In 1728, after the death of his first wife, and upon his marriage with a second, he carried out his design and withdrew with his lady to his castle at Chambéry, where they both soon began to repent their conduct and to be sick of ennui. In 1731 King Charles was told that his father was on his way to Turin to take up his old post as king; but when father and son met, the former repudiated the notion, and alleged health as the sole ground of his return to the capital. King Charles placed the castle of Moncalieri at his father's disposal, where, however, King Victor resumed his intrigues, and at last demanded that his deed of resignation should be delivered up to be cancelled. King Charles felt the position very keenly, and vacillated a good deal; but finally he concurred in the opinion of his Council that there was nothing for it but to put the old king under arrest, which was done under the direction of the Marquis D'Ormea. King Victor died shortly afterwards, namely, in October 1732.]

NOTE.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularising: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career — nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy) — I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor — the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles — the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife — and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more

true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily. R. B.

LONDON: 1842.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, first King of Sardinia.
CHARLES EMMANUEL, his son, Prince of Piedmont.

POLYXENA, wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, minister.

SCENE. The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left, and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1731.

FIRST YEAR, 1730. — KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Charles. You think so? Well, I do not.
Polyxena. My beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet.
This cannot last for ever — oh, may
change

To-day or any day!

Charles. — May change? Ah yes —
May change!

Polyxena. Endure it, then.

Charles. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now
worse.

My father may . . . may take to loving
me;

And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him; — may even cast off her
— That bad Sebastian; but he also may
. . . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?

Polyxena. Now, force me
From you! — me, close by you as if there
gloomed

No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our
path —

At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . .
force me!

Charles. Because I felt as sure, as I feel
sure

We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned

By the world's business that engrossed so
much

My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy, — amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those
two.

'Twas war, peace — France our foe, now
— England, friend —

In love with Spain — at feud with Austria!
Well —

I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for
pride

In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain — "I am out of it," I said —
When . . .

Polyxena. You have told me, Charles.

Charles. Polyxena —
When suddenly, — a warm March day,
just that!

Just so much sunshine as the cottage child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it — and it must fall
Heavily on my brother! Had you seen
Philip — the lion-featured! not like me!

Polyxena. I know —

Charles. And Philip's mouth
yet fast to mine,

His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still
round

My neck, — they bade me rise, "for I was
heir

"To the Duke," they said, "the right hand
of the Duke:"

Till then he was my father, not the Duke.
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate

World's-business their dead boy was born 40
to, I

Must conquer, — ay, the brilliant thing he
was,

I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my
follies,

— All bitter truths were told me, all at
once,

To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:

How should the Duke employ himself,
forsooth,

With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was

punished,
And must put up with — me! 'Twas sad
enough

To learn my future portion and submit. 50
And then the wear and worry, blame on
blame!

For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-
smells about,

How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's
look

As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by, —

I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,

While Charles was spelling at them painfully!

But Victor was my father spite of that. 60
"Duke Victor's entire life has been," I
said,

"Innumerable efforts to one end;
"And on the point now of that end's success,

"Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
"Where's time to be reminded 'tis his child

"He spurns?" And so I suffered —
scarcely suffered,

Since I had you at length!

Polyxena. — To serve in place
Of monarch, minister, and mistress,

Charles.

Charles. But, once that crown obtained,
then wasn't not like

Our lot would alter? "When he rests, 70
takes breath,

"Glances around, sees who there's left to
love —

"Now that my mother's dead, sees I am
left —

"Is it not like he'll love me at the last?"
Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke's
King:

Could I — precisely then — could you
expect

His harshness to redouble? These few
months

Have been . . . have been . . . Polyx-
ena, do you

And God conduct me, or I lose myself!

What would he have? What list they want with me?

Him with this mistress and this minister,
— You see me now, you bear hence forth
us both!

Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Polyxena Endure, endure, beloved!

Say you not

He is your father? All's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must
change:

Or you'll acquire his knighthood, or he'll
And

Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.

10 I bear this — not that there's so much to
bear.

Charles. You bear? Do not I know
that you, tho' bound

To silence for my sake, are perishing

Polyxena. *Charles*! And that other-
wise

When every crevice from the hideous
Court

Is stopped: the Minister to dog me, here —
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged, — but old:
to alter

Our life, there is so much to alter!

Polyxena. Come —

20 Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'Twere wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What's now
afoot

I wonder? Not that any more's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but
guess

For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than
can.

I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such
pomp

30 Bodes . . . what now, *Charles*? Can
you conceive?

Charles. Not I.

Polyxena. A matter of some moment.

Charles. There's our life!

Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I —
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled — am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?

Polyxena. Tush!

D'Ormea's contrivance!

Charles. Ay, how otherwise

Should the young Prince serve for the old
King's *fun*?

— So that the simplest courtier may re-
mark

40 'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger the Court's laughing-
stock.

Something, to live, about that weary busi-
ness

Polyxena is *Charles*! But *Charles* *Charles*,
and which *POLYXENA* examines.

— Not that I comprehend three words of
yours.

After all last night's study.

Polyxena. The faint heart!

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just
now

Its substance . . . (that's the folded
speech I mean,

Concerning the Reduction of the Fields)

— What would you have? — I fancied
while you spoke,

Some tones were just your father's.

Charles. Flattery!

Polyxena. I fancied so: — and here 50
lurks, sure enough,

My *note* upon the Spanish Cuirass! You've
mastered

The fief-speech thoroughly: this other,
faint,

Is an opinion you deliver, — stay,
Don't read it slowly *over* once to me:

Read — there's bare time; you read it
firmly — loud

— Rather loud, looking in his face, —
don't sink

Your eye once — ay, thus! "If Spain
claims . . ." begin

— Just as you look at me!

Charles. At you! Oh truly,

You have I seen, say, marshalling your
troops,

Dismissing councils, or, through doors 60
open,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow
chagrins

— Then radiant, for a crown had all at
once

Seemed *positive* again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast.

In this sweet *note*, *Charles*, divert me
from

Save defects like Sebastian's shameless do.

Or worse, the dappled grey hair and *dead*
white face

And *down* eye as if it ached with galle,
D'Ormea wears . . .

[As he kisses her, enter from the
KING's apartment D'ORMEA.

My kisses from your brow
D'Ormea *travels*. Here! So, King

Victor

Spoke *truth* for once: and who's ordained,
but I

To make that memorable? Back in call.
As he *desires*. Were't better gnash the
teeth,

Or laugh outright now?

Charles [to *Polyxena*]. What's his
will for?

D'Ormea *[aside]*. I question if they even speak to me.

Polyxena *[to CHARLES]*. Face the man! He'll suppose you fear him, else.

[Aloud.] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt?

D'Ormea *[aside]*. Precisely! — If I threatened him, perhaps?

Well, this at least is punishment enough!

Men used to promise punishment would come.

Charles. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'Ormea *[aside]*. Ah

So anxious for his fate? *[Aloud.]* A word, my Prince,

Before you see your father — just one word
Of counsel!

Charles. Oh, your counsel certainly! Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!

Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'Ormea. What? You know As much as I? — preceded me, most like,

In knowledge! So! ('Tis in his eye, be-side —

His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame

Already.) You surmise why you, myself, Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,

Are summoned thus?

Charles. Is the Prince used to know, At any time, the pleasure of the King,

Before his minister? — Polyxena, Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel

Your presence (smile not) through the walls, and take

Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?

D'Ormea *[passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it]*. "Spain!"

Polyxena *[aside to CHARLES]*. Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'Ormea. Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you scorn me — let that pass!

But since it touches him and you, not me, Bid the Prince listen!

Polyxena *[to CHARLES]*. Surely you will listen!

— Deceit? — those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Charles. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'Ormea *[who has approached them, overlooks the other paper CHARLES continues to hold]*. My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!

Sir, I must give you light upon those measures

— For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,

Mine too!

Charles. Release me! Do you gloze on me

Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world

You make for me at Turin) your contempt? — Your measures? — When was not a

hateful task

D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe! What post can I bestow, what grant con-

cede?

Or do you take me for the King? 40

D'Ormea. Not I! Not yet for King, — not for, as yet, thank

God, One who in . . . shall I say a year, a

month? Ay! — shall be wretcheder than e'er was

slave In his Sardinia. — Europe's spectacle

And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved

That I excluded him our counsels? Here *[Touching the paper in CHARLES's hand]*.

Accept a method of extorting gold From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its

worth

In silver first from tillers of the soil, 50 Whose hinds again have to contribute brass

To make up the amount: there's counsel, sir,

My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this —

Savoy's become a mass of misery And wrath, which one man has to meet —

the King:

You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!

Spain entertains a project (here it lies) Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that

same King

Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises; Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be 60

forestalled,

Her offer follows; and he promises . . . Charles. — Promises, sir, when he has

just agreed

To Austria's offer? D'Ormea. That's a counsel, Prince!

But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing

To make their quarrel up between them-

selves

Without the intervention of a friend) Produce both treaties, and both prom-

ises . . .

Charles. How? D'Ormea. Prince, a counsel! And

the fruit of that?

Both parties covenant afresh, to fall Together on their friend, blot out his name, 70

Abolish him from Europe. So, take note, Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight

against:

And what sustains the King but Savoy here,

A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You're not the King!

Charles. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me.

D'Ormea. Clear up! 'Tis no such
thing to envy, then?

You see the King's state in its length and
breadth?

You blame me now for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels?

Wait

Till I explain this morning's business!

Charles [aside]. No —
Stoop to my father, yes, — *D'Ormea*, no:

10 — The King's son, not to the King's
counsellor!

I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed. [*Aloud.*] Then it
is this

You now expressly come to tell me?

D'Ormea. This
To tell! You apprehend me?

Charles. Perfectly.
Further, *D'Ormea*, you have shown your-
self,

For the first time these many weeks and
months,

Disposed to do my bidding?

D'Ormea. From the heart!

Charles. Acquaint my father, first, I
wait his pleasure:

Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

20 *Charles* acquit the King!

D'Ormea [aside]. If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not, —

Then, to avenge it! [*To CHARLES.*] Gra-
cious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Charles. God, I forbore! Which more
offends, that man

Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult

yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!

No — dull am I, conceded, — but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Polyxena. How decides?
Charles. You would be freed *D'Ormea's*
eye and hers?

30 — Could fly the court with me and live
content?

So, this it is for which the knights as-
semble!

The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,

— For this!
Polyxena. What mean you?

Charles. How? You fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could

you?
These last two months of care to inculcate

How dull I am, — *D'Ormea's* present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse

Were I a King — as wretched as now
dull —

You recognise in it no winding up
Of a long plot?

Polyxena. Why should there be a plot?

Charles. The crown's secure now; I
should shame the crown —

An old complaint; the point is, how to
gain

My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Polyxena. In truth?
Charles. They dare not quite dethrone

Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till

They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my

state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a 50

word,
They'd have me tender them myself my

rights
As one incapable; — some cause for that,

Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
I shall apprise the King he may resume

My rights this moment.
Polyxena. Pause! I dare not think

So ill of Victor.
Charles. Think no ill of him!

Polyxena. — Nor think him, then, so
shallow as to suffer

His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet — you are the last of a great line;

There's a great heritage at stake; new days 60
Seemed to await this newest of the realms

Of Europe: — *Charles*, you must with-
stand this!

Charles. Ah —
You dare not then renounce the splendid

Court
For one whom all the world despises?

Speak!
Polyxena. My gentle husband, speak I

will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure

Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could? Oh what happiness

it were —
To live, my *Charles*, and die, alone with

you!
Charles. I grieve I asked you. To the 70

presence, then!
By this, *D'Ormea* acquaints the King, no

doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,

And that no less will serve than Victor's
mouth

Demonstrating in council what I am.
I have not breathed, I think, these many

years!
Polyxena. Why, it may be! — if he

desire to wed
That woman, call legitimate her child.

Charles. You see as much? Oh, let
his will have way!

You'll not repent confiding in me, love?

There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont,
 far,
 Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose
 You hear first how I mean to speak my
 mind?
 — Loudly and firmly both, this time, be
 sure!
 I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can
 tell?
 Once away, ever then away! I breathe.
Polyxena. And I too breathe.
Charles. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR.

PART II.

*Enter King VICTOR, bearing the Regalia on
 a cushion, from his apartment. He
 calls loudly.*

Victor. D'Ormea! — for patience fails
 me, treading thus
 Among the obscure trains I have laid, —
 my knights
 Safe in the hall here — in that anteroom,
 My son, — D'Ormea, where? Of this,
 one touch — [*Laying down the crown.*]
 This fireball to these mute black cold
 trains — then
 Outbreak enough!
 [*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
 This, glancing o'er my house for ages —
 shaped,
 Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus
 now,
 Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
 The braver, — and when I have clutched
 a prize
 My ancestry died wan with watching for,
 To lose it! — by a slip, a fault, a trick
 Learnt to advantage once and not un-
 learned
 When past the use, — “just this once
 more” (I thought)
 “Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
 “And then away with trick!” An over-
 sight
 I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
 These fifty years, must happen now!
 There's peace
 At length; and I, to make the most of
 peace,
 Ventured my project on our people here,
 As needing not their help: which Europe
 knows,
 And means, cold-blooded, to dispose her-
 self
 30 (Apart from plausibilities of war)
 To crush the new-made King — who ne'er
 till now
 Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of
 earth

And laughed at her: my name was left,
 my sword
 Left, all was left! But she can take, she
 knows,
 This crown, herself conceded . . . That's
 to try,
 Kind Europe! My career's not closed as
 yet!
 This boy was ever subject to my will,
 Timid and tame — the fitter! D'Ormea,
 too —
 What if the sovereign also rid himself
 Of thee, his prime of parasites? — I delay! 40
 D'Ormea! . . . [*As D'ORMEA enters, the
 KING seats himself.*]

My son, the Prince — attends he?
D'Ormea. Sir,
 He does attend. The crown prepared! —
 it seems
 That you persist in your resolve.
Victor. Who's come?
 The chancellor and the chamberlain? My
 knights?
D'Ormea. The whole Annunziata. If,
 my liege,
 Your fortune had not tottered worse than
 now . . .
Victor. Del Borgo has drawn up the
 schedules? mine —
 My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
 Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
 First, you read the Annulment of the 50
 Oaths;
 Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince
 shall sign;
 Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
 On which, I enter.
D'Ormea. Sir, this may be truth;
 You, sir, may do as you affect — may
 break
 Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
 If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
 My counsel as I've counselled many times!
 What if the Spaniard and the Austrian
 threat?
 There's England, Holland, Venice —
 which ally
 Select you?
Victor. Ah! Come, D'Ormea, —
 “truth”
 Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
 I've broken faith with Venice, Holland,
 England
 — As who knows if not you?
D'Ormea. But why with me
 Break faith — with one ally, your best,
 break faith?
Victor. When first I stumbled on you,
 Marquis — 'twas
 At Mondovi — a little lawyer's clerk . . .
D'Ormea. Therefore your soul's ally! —
 who brought you through
 Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains
 enough —

Who simply echoed you in these affairs —
On whom you cannot therefore visit these
Affairs' ill-fortune — whom you trust to
guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) through these
affairs!

Victor. I was about to notice, had you
not

Prevented me, that since that great town
kept

With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,

He missed a sight, — my naval armament
10 When I burned Toulon. How the skiff
exults

Upon the galliot's¹ wave! — rises its
height,

O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in
turn?

Apply this: you have been my minister
— Next me, above me possibly; — sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?

20 You gave your soul to get it; you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with
me?

Whereas it cants you to another crest;
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

D'Ormea. Ah, you so much despise me?
Victor. You, D'Ormea?

Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with
mine

When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not
one

30 (. . . Or wait, did Pianezze? — ah, just
the same!)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance
reached

The length of yours, but has assured me
(commonly

Standing much as you stand, — or nearer,
say,

The door to make his exit on his speech)
— I should repent of what I did. D'Or-

mea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade
you

Prepare the schedules! But you stopped
in time,

You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES.

Victor [changing his tone]. Are you in-
structed? Do

¹ A vessel used on the Mediterranean, built
for speed.

My order, point by point! About it, sir!

D'Ormea. You so despise me! [*Aside.*]

One last stay remains —

The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,

To save you from this fate!

Charles [aside]. Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for — by him?

Victor [to D'ORMEA]. Apprise Del
Borgo, Spava, and the rest,

Our son attends them; then return.

D'Ormea. One word!

Charles [aside]. A moment's pause and
they would drive me hence,

I do believe!

D'Ormea [aside]. Let but the boy be
firm!

Victor. You disobey?

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. You do not
disobey

Me, at least? Did you promise that or no?

D'Ormea. Sir, I am yours: what would
you? Yours am I!

Charles. When I have said what I shall
say, 'tis like

Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!

Through you, as through a breast of glass,
I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth till
now,

Take my contempt! You might have
spared me much,

Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed your-
self:

That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!

D'Ormea. As son, the father — father
as, the son!

My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*]

Victor [seated]. And you, what meant
you, pray,

Speaking thus to D'Ormea?

Charles. Let us not
Waste words upon D'Ormea! Those I spent

Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Victor. One called to manage a king-
dom, Charles, needs heart

To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea — to me, at least.

Charles [aside]. Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point. Then be it so.

[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me
certain papers — these —

To be reported on, — your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand?

Victor. For God's sake, what has night
brought forth? Pronounce

The . . . what's your word? — result!

Charles. Sir, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt: —
a few

Lame thoughts, regard for you alone
could wring,

Lame as they are, from brains like mine,
believe!

As 'tis, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.

Victor. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your
result!

Charles. I never should have done great
things of course,

But . . . oh my father, had you loved me
more!

Victor. Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea
played me false, I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is
diffused — yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.

o Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and
each,

Their mode: I doubt not, many have their
sons

To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:

I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea,
Charles!

Charles. 'Tis well I am a subject then,
not you.

Victor [aside]. D'Ormea has told him
everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha!

I apprehend you: when all's said, you take

o Your private station to be prized beyond

My own, for instance?

Charles. — Do and ever did

So take it: 'tis the method you pursue

That grieves . . .

Victor. These words! Let me

express, my friend,

Your thoughts. You penetrate what I

supposed

Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!

I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Charles. To me?

Victor. Now, — in that chamber.

Charles. You resign

The crown to me?

Victor. And time enough, Charles,

sure?

Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years

30 A crown's a load. I covet quiet once

Before I die, and summoned you for that.

Charles. 'Tis I will speak: you ever

hated me.

I bore it, — have insulted me, borne too —

Now you insult yourself; and I remember

What I believed you, what you really are,

And cannot bear it. What! My life has

passed

Under your eye, tormented as you know, —

Your whole sagacities, one after one,

At leisure brought to play on me — to

40 A fool, I thought and I submitted; now

You'd prove . . . what would you prove
me?

Victor. This to me?

I hardly know you!

Charles. Know me? Oh indeed

You do not! Wait till I complain next

time

Of my simplicity! — for here's a sage

Knows the world well, is not to be de-

ceived,

And his experience and his Macchiavels,

D'Ormeas, teach him — what? — that I

this while

Have envied him his crown! He has not

smiled,

I warrant, — has not eaten, drunk, nor

slept,

For I was plotting with my Princess 54

yonder!

Who knows what we might do or might not

do?

Go now, be politic, astound the world!

That sentry in the antechamber — nay,

The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crown.*]

That was to take me — ask them if they

think

Their own sons envy them their posts! —

Know me!

Victor. But you know me, it seems: so,

learn in brief,

My pleasure. This assembly is con-

vened . . .

Charles. Tell me, that woman put it in

your head!

You were not sole contriver of the scheme, 60

My father!

Victor. Now observe me, sir! I jest

Seldom — on these points, never. Here, I

say,

The knights assemble to see me concede,

And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Charles. Farewell!

'Twere vain to hope to change this: I can

end it.

Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk

Into obscurity: I'll die for you,

But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,

Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'Ormea [aside]. Ha, sure he's changed

again —

Means not to fall into the cunning trap! 70

Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Victor [suddenly placing the crown upon

the head of CHARLES]. D'Ormea,

your King!

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me!

Charles,

Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,

Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks

real!

My reasons after; reason upon reason
 After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
 By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
 Why, the boy swoons! [*To D'ORMEA.*]
 Come this side!

D'Ormea [*as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR*]. You persist?

Victor. Yes, I conceive the gesture's meaning. Faith,

He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
 Be re-assured, my Charles! Is't over now?
 Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains

To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads

10 The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
 Then I sign; after that, come back to me.
D'Ormea. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Victor. Five minutes longer
 I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate —
 And I'll so turn those minutes to account
 That . . . Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*]

Could I bring
 My foolish mind to undergo the reading
 That Act of Abdication!

[*AS CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.*]

Thanks, dear Charles!

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*]

Victor. A novel feature in the boy, —
 indeed

Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite
 right,

20 This earnest tone: your truth, now, for
 effect!

It answers every purpose: with that look,
 That voice, — I hear him: "I began no
 treaty,"

(He speaks to Spain), "nor ever dreamed
 of this

"You show me; this I from my soul regret;
 "But if my father signed it, bid not me
 "Dishonour him—who gave me all,
 beside:"

And, "True," says Spain, "'twere harsh
 to visit that

"Upon the Prince." Then come the
 nobles trooping:

"I grieve at these exactions — I had cut
 30 "This hand off ere impose them; but shall I
 "Undo my father's deed?" — and they
 confer:

"Doubtless he was no party after all;

"Give the Prince time!"

Ay, give us time, but time!
 Only, he must not, when the dark day
 comes,

Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
 We'll have no child's play, no desponding
 fits,

No Charles at each cross turn entreating
 Victor

To take his crown again. Guard against
 that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!

No — Charles's counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest? 44
D'Ormea. "King Charles!" What
 then may you be?

Victor. Anything!

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
 Now beats a quick retreat toward Cham-
 bery,

Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy
 folk

To drive your trade without him. I'm
 Count Remont —

Count Tende — any little place's Count!

D'Ormea. Then Victor, Captain against
 Catinat

At Staffarde, where the French beat you;
 and Duke

At Turin, where you beat the French;
 King late

Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia, 50
 — Now, "any little place's Count" —

Victor. Proceed!

D'Ormea. Breaker of vows to God, who
 crowned you first;

Breaker of vows to man, who kept you
 since;

Most profligate to me who outraged God
 And man to serve you, and am made pay
 crimes

I was but privy to, by passing thus
 To your imbecile son — who, well you
 know,

Must — (when the people here, and na-
 tions there,

Clamour for you the main delinquent,
 slipped

From King to — "Count of any little 60
 place")

Must needs surrender me, all in his
 reach, —

I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end —
 See you on your return — (you will re-
 turn) —

To him you trust, a moment . . .

Victor. Trust him? How?

My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
 Make me know where my trust errs!

D'Ormea. In his fear,
 His love, his — but discover for yourself
 What you are weakest, trusting in!

Victor. Aha,

D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
 In your repertory? You know old 76

Victor —
 Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash — (I've
 heard

Talkers who little thought the King so
 close)

Felicitous now, were't not, to provoke him
 To clean forget, one minute afterward,
 His solemn act, and call the nobles back

And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured? — for the dear sake of
what?

Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such
am I,

Count Tende or Count anything you please
— Only, the same that did the things you
say,

And, among other things you say not,
used

Your finest fibre, meanest muscle, — you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate — mere lumber in the
midst,

You and your works. Why, what on earth
beside

Are you made for, you sort of ministers?

D'Ormea. Not left, though, to my fate!
Your witless son

Has more wit than to load himself with
lumber:

He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Victor. Stay with my son — protect the
weaker side!

D'Ormea. Ay, to be tossed the people
like a rag,

And flung by them for Spain and Austria's
sport,

Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!

Victor. Prevent, beside,

My own return!

D'Ormea. That's half prevented now

'Twill go hard but you find a wondrous
charm

In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigi-
lance —

Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's
a-wing —

Brave days that wait the Louis of the
South,

Italy's Janus!

Victor. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!

D'Ormea. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?

Victor. Whene'er
Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you
judge!

[Shouts inside "King CHARLES!"

D'Ormea. Do you repent?

Victor [after a slight pause]. . . I've
kept them waiting? Yes!

Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!

[They go out.]

Enter POLYXENA.

Polyxena. A shout! The sycophants
are free of Charles!

Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,

But just an ordinary fact! Beside,

Here they've set forms for such proceed-
ings; Victor

Imprisoned his own mother: he should
know,

If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.

Ne'er was my husband for the wily king 46

And the unworthy subjects: be it so!

Come you safe out of them, my Charles!
Our life

Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I
dreamed

Might prove your lot; for strength was
shut in you

None guessed but I — strength which, un-
trammelled once,

Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry —
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,

Simplicity and utter truthfulness
— All which, they shout to lose!

So, now my work
Begins — to save him from regret. Save 50

Charles
Regret? — the noble nature! He's not
made

Like these Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone! —
the Crown Prince? Gone! —

Where's Savoy? Gone! — Sardinia?
Gone! But Charles

Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers
arrive,

If he looked almost handsome yester-
twilight

As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he
look?

Farewell, you stripped and whited mul-
berry-trees

Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine! 60

Now I'll teach you my language: I'm not
forced

To speak Italian now, Charles?

[She sees the crown.] What is this?
Answer me — who has done this? An-
swer!

Charles. He!

I am King now.

Polyxena. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has made
you King?

What's he then? What's to follow this?
You, King?

Charles. Have I done wrong? Yes,
for you were not by!

Polyxena. Tell me from first to last.
Charles. Hush — a new world

Brightens before me; he is moved away
— The dark form that eclipsed it, he sub- 70

sides
Into a shape supporting me like you,

And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's
King.

Polyxena. Now stop: was not this
Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old?

Charles. He was.

Polyxena. And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be — what?

Charles. King.

Polyxena. Then why unking himself?

Charles. Those years are cause enough.

Polyxena. The only cause?

Charles. Some new perplexities.

Polyxena. Which you can solve
Although he cannot?

Charles. He assures me so.

Polyxena. And this he means shall
last — how long?

Charles. How long?

Think you I fear the perils I confront?
He's praising me before the people's face —
My people!

Polyxena. Then he's changed — grown
kind, the King?

Where can the trap be?

Charles. Heart and soul I pledge!
My father, could I guard the crown you
gained,

Transmit as I received it, — all good else
Would I surrender!

Polyxena. Ah, it opens then
Before you, all you dreaded formerly?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?

Charles. So much to dare? The better;
— much to dread?

The better. I'll adventure though alone.
Triumph or die, there's Victor still to
witness

Who dies or triumphs — either way, alone!

Polyxena. Once I had found my share
in triumph, Charles,

Or death.

Charles. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered
Heaven

A moment since. I will deserve the crown.

Polyxena. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt
it were a glorious thing

For any people, if a heart like his

30 Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Victor. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare
thanks!

I know you, and Polyxena I know.

Here's Charles — I am his guest now —
does he bid me

Be seated? And my light-haired blue-
eyed child

Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

Polyxena. Most grateful shall we now
be, talking least

Of gratitude — indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to
say

To Charles.

Charles. Pray speak, sir!

Victor. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the
point

Of sight. You're now the King: you'll
comprehend

Much you may oft have wondered at —
the shifts,

Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.

For what's our post? Here's Savoy and
here's Piedmont,

Here's Montferrat — a breadth here, a
space there —

To o'ersweep all these, what's one weapon
worth?

I often think of how they fought in Greece:
(Or Rome, which was it? You're the
scholar, Charles!)

You made a front-thrust? But if your
shield too

Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd
knave

Reached you behind; and him foiled,
straight if thong

And handle of that shield were not cast
loose,

And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape
these,

And reach your place of refuge — e'en
then, odds

If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.

Oh, you will see!

Charles. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Victor. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made
Europe's fighting-man!

The barrier-guarder, if you please. You
clutch

Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory

I held — ay, and will hold . . . which you
shall hold

Despite the couple! But I've surely
earned

Exemption from these weary politics,
— The privilege to prattle with my son

And daughter here, though Europe wait the
while.

Polyxena. Nay, sir, — at Chambery,
away for ever,

As soon you will be, 'tis farewell we bid
you:

Turn these few fleeting moments to ac-
count!

'Tis just as though it were a death.

Victor. Indeed!

Polyxena [aside]. Is the trap there?

Charles. Ay, call this parting — death!

The sacredd your memory becomes.

If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back

My father?

Victor. I mean . . .

Polyxena [who watches VICTOR narrowly this while]. Your father does not mean

You should be ruling for your father's sake:

It is your people must concern you wholly Instead of him. You mean this, sir?

(He drops

My hand!)

Charles. That people is now part of me.

Victor. About the people! I took certain measures

Some short time since . . . Oh, I know well, you know

But little of my measures! These affect The nobles; we've resumed some grants, imposed

A tax or two; prepare yourself, in short, For clamour on that score. Mark me: you yield

No jot of aught entrusted you!

Polyxena. No jot

You yield!

Charles. My father, when I took the oath,

Although my eye might stray in search of yours,

I heard it, understood it, promised God

What you require. Till from this eminence

He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede The meaneast of my rights.

Victor [aside]. The boy's a fool!

— Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?

To-day the sweets of reigning; let to-morrow

Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside

smewhat to press upon your notice first.

Charles. Then why delay it for an instant, sir?

That Spanish claim perchance? And, now you speak,

— This morning, my opinion was mature, Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing

To one I ne'er am like to fear in future! My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Victor. Betimes indeed. Not now,

Charles! You require

A host of papers on it.

D'Ormea [coming forward]. Here they are.

[To CHARLES.] I, sir, was minister and much beside

Of the late monarch; to say little, him I served: on you I have, to say e'en less, No claim. This case contains those papers: with them

I tender you my office.

Victor [hastily]. Keep him, Charles! There's reason for it — many reasons: you Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there, — but

He's mixed up in this matter — he'll desire To quit you, for occasions known to me: Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!

Polyxena [aside]. His minister thrust on us!

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Sir, believe, In justice to myself, you do not need E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem

My feelings toward you, as a private man, They quit me in the vast and untried field Of action. Though I shall myself (as late In your own hearing I engaged to do) Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help Is necessary. Think the past forgotten And serve me now!

D'Ormea. I did not offer you My service — would that I could serve you, sir!

As for the Spanish matter . . .

Victor. But dispatch At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,

Before the living! Help to house me safe Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape!

Here is a paper — will you overlook What I propose reserving for my needs? I get as far from you as possible;

Here's what I reckon my expenditure.

Charles [reading]. A miserable fifty thousand crowns —

Victor. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!

Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out

All that, yourself!

Charles [still reading]. "Count Tende" — what means this?

Victor. Me: you were but an infant when I burst

Through the defile of Tende upon France. Had only my allies kept true to me!

No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take Just as . . .

D'Ormea. — The Marchioness Sebastian takes

The name of Spigno.

Charles. How, sir?

Victor [to D'ORMEA]. Fool! All that

Was for my own detailing. [To CHARLES.]

That anon!

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Explain what you have said, sir!

D'Ormea.

I supposed

'The marriage of the King to her I named, Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks, Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Polyxena [aside]. With us The minister — with him the mistress!

Charles [to VICTOR]. No — Tell me you have not taken her — that woman

To live with, past recall!

Victor. And where's the crime . . .

Polyxena [to CHARLES]. True, sir, this is a matter past recall

And past your cognisance. A day before, And you had been compelled to note this: now, —

Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:

What the Count did, is no concern of yours.

Charles [after a pause]. The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!

Victor.

Why, my son,

I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,

Spoils everything: though I was over reached,

A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea, Inform the King!

D'Ormea [without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely]. Thus stands the case with Spain:

When first 'lie Infant Carlos claimed his proper

Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Victor. I tell you, that stands over!

Let that rest!

There is the policy!

Charles [to D'ORMEA]. Thus much I know,

And more — too much: the remedy?

D'Ormea.

Of course!

No glimpse of one.

Victor.

No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself — time makes it.

D'Ormea [to CHARLES]. But if . . .

Victor [still more hastily]. In fine, I

shall take care of that:

And, with another project that I have . . .

D'Ormea [turning on him]. Oh, since

Count Tende means to take again

King Victor's crown! —

Polyxena [throwing herself at VICTOR'S feet]. E'en now retake it, sir!

Oh speak! We are your subjects both, once more!

Say it — a word effects it! You meant not,

Nor do mean now, to take it: but you must!

'Tis in you — in your nature — and the shame's

Not half the shame 'twould grow to afterwards!

Charles. Polyxena!

Polyxena. A word recalls the knights — Say it! What's promising and what's the past?

Say you are still King Victor?

D'Ormea.

Better say

The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR rises.]

Charles.

With such a crime

I have not charged you, sir!

Polyxena. (Charles turns from me!)

SECOND YEAR, 1731. — KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter Queen POLYXENA and D'ORMEA. — A pause.

Polyxena. And now, sir, what have you to say?

D'Ormea.

Count Tende . . .

Polyxena. Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve

On uttering this strange intelligence

— Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach

The capital, because you know King Charles

Tarries a day or two at Evian baths

Behind me: — but take warning, — here and thus

[Seating herself in the royal seat.]

I listen, if I listen — not your friend.

Explicitly the statement, if you still

Persist to urge it on me, must proceed: —

I am not made for aught else.

D'Ormea. Good! Count Tende . . .

Polyxena. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles

Who even more mistrusts you.

D'Ormea.

Does he so?

Polyxena. Why should he not?

D'Ormea.

Ay, why not?

Motives, seek

You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve

God at the devil's bidding — will that do?

I'm proud: our people have been pacified,

Really I know not how —

Polyxena.

By truthfulness.

D'Ormea. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do

With pacifying them. Our foreign perils

Also exceed my means to stay: but here 'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued.

Count Tende

Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,

Have the old monarch back, his mistress
back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.

Polyxena. When?

D'Ormea. Let's think.

Home-matters settled — Victor's coming
now;

Let foreign matters settle — Victor's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Polyxena [*reading the papers he presents*]. If this should prove a plot
'twixt you and Victor?

You seek annoyances to give the pretext
For what you say you fear.

D'Ormea. Oh, possibly!

o I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please!

Polyxena. Half of your tale is true;
most like, the Count

Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.

D'Ormea. Keep safe

These papers: or, to serve me, leave no
proof

I thus have counselled! When the Count
returns,

And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me
little

To have thus counselled.

Polyxena. The King abdicate!

o *D'Ormea.* He's good, we knew long
since — wise, we discover —

Firm, let us hope: — but I'd have gone to
work

With him away. Well!

[*CHARLES without*]. In the Council
Chamber?

D'Ormea. All's lost!

Polyxena. Oh, surely not King

Charles! He's changed —

That's not this year's care-burthened voice
and step:

'Tis last year's step, the Prince's voice!

D'Ormea. I know.

[*Enter CHARLES: — D'ORMEA
retiring a little.*]

Charles. Now wish me joy, Polyxena!

Wish it me

The old way! [*She embraces him.*]

There was too much cause for that!

But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load

o I'm free of — free! I said this year would
end

Or it, or me — but I am free, thank God!

Polyxena. How, Charles?

Charles. You do not

guess? The day I found

Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad

And how my father was involved in it, —

Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no
more

Until I cleared his name from obloquy.

We did the people right — 'twas much to
gain

That point, redress our nobles' grievance,
too —

But that took place here, was no crying
shame:

All must be done abroad, — if I abroad 40

Appeased the justly-angered Powers, de-
stroyed

The scandal, took down Victor's name at
last

From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Be-
hold

The proud result — a Treaty, Austria,
Spain

Agree to —

D'Ormea [*aside*]. I shall merely stipu-
late

For an experienced headsman.

Charles. Not a soul

Is compromised: the blotted past's a
blank:

Even *D'Ormea* escapes unquestioned.
See!

It reached me from Vienna; I remained 50

At Evian to dispatch the Count his news;

'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago —

And here am I: do I deserve to feel

Your warm white arms around me?

D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. He knows
that?

Charles. What, in Heaven's name,
means this?

D'Ormea. He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!

Plainly, unless you post this very hour

Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery

And take precautions I acquaint you with,

Your father will return here. 60

Charles. Are you crazed,

D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well
return

To take his crown!

D'Ormea. He will return for that.

Charles [*to POLYXENA*]. You have not
listened to this man?

Polyxena. He spoke
About your safety — and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

Charles [*to D'ORMEA*]. What

Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'Ormea. Me?

His heart, sir; you may not be used to
read

Such evidence however; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA'S papers.*]

My evidence.

Charles [*to POLYXENA*]. Oh, worthy
this of you!

And of your speech I never have forgotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness; which 70

haunts me

As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus
long
That there might be no least occasion
left

For aught of its prediction coming true!
And now, when there is left no least occasion

To instigate my father to such crime —
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
That speech and recognise Polyxena —
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
10 That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his
slanders

Still in your hand! Silent?

Polyxena. As the wronged are.

Charles. And you, D'Ormea, since
when have you presumed
To spy upon my father? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'Ormea. The when and where and
how belong

To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.
You oftimes serve yourself; I'd serve you
here:

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a
word,

Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
20 Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Charles. You hate my father?

D'Ormea. Oh, just as you will!

[*Looking at POLYXENA.*]

A minute since, I loved him — hate him,
now!

What matter? — if you ponder just one
thing:

Has he that treaty? — he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Charles. Well for you
They are not! [*To POLYXENA.*] Him I

knew of old, but you —
To hear that pickthank, further his
designs! [*To D'ORMEA.*]

Guards? — were they here, I'd bid them,
for your trouble,

Arrest you.

D'Ormea. Guards you shall not want.
I lived

30 The servant of your choice, not of your
need.

You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge — its duty
Would bid me press you read those docu-
ments.

Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

Charles [*taking it*]. The papers also!

Do you think

I dare not read them?

Polyxena. Read them, sir!

Charles. They prove,

My father, still a month within the year

Since he so solemnly consigned it me,

Means to resume his crown? They shall
prove that,

Or my best dungeon . . . 46

D'Ormea. Even say, Chambery!

'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

Charles. You prove

Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go

there!

Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil

Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two!

Do say,

You'll see the falsehood of the charges

proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them

proved

False charges — my heart's love of other

times!

Polyxena. Ah, Charles!

Charles [*to D'ORMEA*]. Precede me, sir!

D'Ormea. And I'm at length

A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,

Of miracles. My conscious innocence! 56

As they go out, enter — by the middle

door at which he pauses — VICTOR.

Victor. Sure I heard voices? No. Well,

I do best

To make at once for this, the heart o' the

place.

The old room! Nothing changed! So

near my seat,

D'Ormea?

[*Pushing away the stool which is*

by the KING's chair.]

I want that meeting over first,

I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea,

slow

To hearten me, the supple knave? That

burst

Of spite so eased him! He'll inform

me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All's in rough: let

all

Remain rough. There's full time to draw

back — nay,

There's nought to draw back from, as yet; 60

whereas,

If reason should be, to arrest a course

Of error — reason good, to interpose

And save, as I have saved so many times,

Our House, admonish my son's giddy

youth,

Relieve him of a weight that proves too

much —

Now is the time, — or now, or never.

'Faith,

This kind of step is pitiful, not due

To Charles, this stealing back — hither,

because

He's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!

But thus it is. The age of crafty men 70

Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off

Dissimulation; we may intersperse

Extenuating passages of strength,

Ardour, vivacity, and wit — may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our
lives —
Ah, loathsome!

Not so — or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army's mine — I've
witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the
Court's

Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea's still
to D'Ormea and mine. There's some grace
clinging yet.

Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I'd take the crown.

No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit
here

And let things right themselves, the masque
unmasque

Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and
hot blood, —

The young King, crowned, but calm before
his time,

They say, — the eager mistress with her
taunts, —

And the sad earnest wife who motions me
to Away — ay, there she knelt to me! E'en
yet

I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.

Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin — yes, or no?
'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted
chamber,

Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. That's the change
must strike.

No silence last year! Some one flung
doors wide

(Those two great doors which scrutinise
me now)

And out I went 'mid crowds of men —
men talking,

to Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:
That makes the misery of this return.

Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead —
dropped

In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in
France —

Spurned on its horns or underneath its
hooves,

When the spent monster went upon its
knees

To pad and pash the prostrate wretch — I,
Victor,

to Sole to have stood up against France, beat
down

By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
There's no more Victor when the world
wakes up!

Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as
whole days

After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood) —
there creeps

A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all, 50
That a strange old man, with face outworn
for wounds,

Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Beggings a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter
follow

The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about
the midst

O' the market-place, where takes the old
king breath

Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-
gate

Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no — or no?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Charles. Just as I thought! A miser- 60
able falsehood

Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*
Victor [after a pause]. Not at Evian,
Charles?

What's this? Why do you run to close
the doors?

No welcome for your father?

Charles [aside]. Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever. 70

Victor. Must
I ask once more . . .

Charles. No — I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your
health declines;

True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot;
You'd choose one fitter for your final
lodge —

Veneria, or Moncagliar — ay, that's close
And I concede it.

Victor. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian baths . . .

Charles. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied

The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence

Would only disconcert me —

Victor.

Charles?

Charles. — Me, set

For ever in a foreign course to yours,

And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!

Though I sink under it! What brings you here?

Victor. Not hope of this reception, certainly,

From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode

10 Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity!

Charles.

— You mean,

Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,

I should speak otherwise! But turn not that

To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?

Is aught deficient in your equipage?

Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs

At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

20 *Victor [aside].* Here is the grateful
much-professing son

Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake

I think to waive my plans of public good!
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to

take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,

What would be warrant for this bitterness?
I gave it — grant I would resume it —

well?

Charles. I should say simply — leaving out the why

And how — you made me swear to keep that crown:

And as you then intended . . .

Victor.

Fool! What way

30 Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"

I can intend up to a certain point,
No farther. I intended to preserve

The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating

The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like

To lose it . . .

Charles.

Keep within your sphere

and mine!

It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk

By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;

All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.

Victor. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in

Your recognition of it, truth is, too;

And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,

— In its success, this falsehood turns, again,

Truth for the world. But you are right: these themes

Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly, — it fails, my 50

scheme:

I hope to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about. I interpose

On your behalf — with my son's good in sight —

To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.

There's Sicily, for instance, — granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I

give
That island with the rest, my work's half done.

For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Charles. Our sakes are one; and that, 60
you could not say,

Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith: — a year has wrought an age's

change.

This people's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy

Your policy.

Victor [with an outburst]. I know it!
You undo

All I have done — my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolute rule

In Europe: do you think I sit and smile,
Bid you throw power to the populace —

See my Sardinia, that has kept apart, 70
Join in the mad and democratic whirl

Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
England casts off her kings; France

mimics England:
This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I

talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,

But bidding plagues, which follow sons
like you,

Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this — if minded so — my son?

Charles. You could not. Bitterer curses
than your curse

Have I long since denounced upon myself 80
If I misused my power. In fear of these

I entered on those measures — will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count

Tende . . .

Victor. No!
But no! But if, my Charles, your —
more than old —
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said
plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his
strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Cham-
bery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga —
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
10 When he was fortunate and young
Charles. My father!
Victor. Stay yet! — and if he said he
could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever — of the Crown that
binds
Your brain up, whole, sound and impreg-
nable,
Creating kingliness — the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it,
back would beat
Invaders — and the golden Ball which
throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as choose
you may!
20 — If I must totter up and down the
streets
My sires built, where myself have intro-
duced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts!
Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pre-
tend
To live my former self once more — King
Victor,
The venturous yet politic: they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince: friends
wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
30 That else would break upon my dotage! —
You —
Whom now I see preventing my old
shame —
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale —
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended? Say you
not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

*Polyxena [advancing and withdrawing
CHARLES — to VICTOR].* In this con-
juncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quiver-
ing lip)
The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him
fling

His well-earned fame away: there must not
follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth 40
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and
himself,
And, when that child somehow stood
danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin
Charles
— Body, that's much, — and soul, that's
more — and realm,
That's most of all! No enemy shall
say . . .
D'Ormea. Do you repent, sir?
Victor [resuming himself]. D'Ormea?
This is well!
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily
done!
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts 50
Himself on you to say! — Ah, they'll
correct
The amiable blind facility
You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Thanks,
D'Ormea!
You have fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some
few more livres
To swell his income! Had you, lady,
missed
The moment, a permission might be
granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remember properly the list 60
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away — to reap the fruits
I should have looked for!
Charles. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!
Victor. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay —
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglior
— Who knows?
Charles. Adieu!
Victor. You bid me this adieu 70
With the old spirit?
Charles. Adieu!
Victor. Charles — Charles!
Charles. Adieu!
[VICTOR goes.]
Charles. You were mistaken, Marquis,
as you hear.
'Twas for another purpose the Count
came.
The Count desires Moncaglior. Give the
order!
D'Ormea [leisurely]. Your minister has
lost your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Charles [*flinging his badge back*]. Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!

D'Ormea. There's none to loose, alas!
I see
I never am to die a martyr.

Polyxena. Charles!

Charles. No praise, at least, Polyxena
— no praise!

KING CHARLES.

PART II.

D'ORMEA, *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King
Charles
Or else King Victor — that's a balance:
but now,

D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
10 O' the scale, — that's sure enough. A
point to solve,

My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest! No
matter.

Prompt are the righteous ever with their
rede

To us the wrongful; lesson them this once!
For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and
ten,

20 Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty
years;

A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it?

'Twas a stump then; a stump it still must
be:

While forward saplings, at the outset
checked,

In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forests' green fraternity.

Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
30 And bound up for the burning. Now for
it!

Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with
Attendants.

D'Ormea [*ris*es]. Sir, in the due dis-
charge of this my office —

This enforced summons of yourself from
Turin,

And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night, — there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Charles. Well, sir?

D'Ormea. — That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much, — it may prove less
irksome now.

Charles. What would you utter?

D'Ormea. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .

Charles. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

D'Ormea. Let
The Count communicate with France —
its King,

His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for
this,

Though for no other war.

Charles. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently?

[D'ORMEA delivers papers which
CHARLES inspects.

Charles. Good — very good. Mon-
torio . . . how is this?

— Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?

D'Ormea. Since his land has been re-
lieved

From double imposts, this he manages.
But under the late monarch . . .

Charles. Peace! I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning

What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'Ormea. Count Spava means to head
his troops himself.

Something to fight for now; "Whereas,"
says he,

"Under the sovereign's father" . . .

Charles. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'Ormea. Yes.

[To POLYXENA while, CHARLES con-
tinues to inspect the papers.

A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;

Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends

60 Such sway: our King's begins precisely
there.

For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,

In time of peace, the King who brought
them peace:

In war, — his voice, his eyes, help more
than fear.

They love you, sir!

Charles [*to Attendants*]. Bring the
regalia forth!

Quit the room! And now, Marquis,
answer me!

Why should the King of France invade
my realm?

D'Ormea. Why? Did I not acquaint
your Majesty

An hour ago?

Charles. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'Ormea. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Charles. And your reason
For saying this?

D'Ormea [aside]. Ay, just his father's
way!

[*TO CHARLES.*] The Count wrote yester-
day to your forces' Chief,

Rhebinder — made demand of help —

Charles. To try
Rhebinder — he's of alien blood: aught
else?

D'Ormea. Receiving a refusal, — some
hours after,

The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication: he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather —

Charles. What ensued?

D'Ormea. At midnight, only two hours
since, at Turin,

He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open —
Admit him.

Charles. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then?

D'Ormea. They told it me.
And I —

Charles. Most faithful —

D'Ormea. Tell it you — with this
Moreover of my own: if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
O' the road to France for succour.

Charles. Very good!
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant? — have, that is, your
project

For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt?
D'Ormea. I give my counsel, — and the
only one.

A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a
pang:

30 But now the harsher course must be pur-
sued.

These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list
Of those suspected merely — men to
watch;

This — of the few of the Count's very
household

You must, however reluctantly, arrest;
While here's a method of remonstrance —
sure

Not stronger than the case demands — to
take

With the Count's self.

Charles. Deliver those three papers.

Polyxena [while CHARLES inspects

them — to D'ORMEA]. Your measures
are not over-harsh, sir: France

Will hardly be deterred from her intents 40
By these.

D'Ormea. If who proposes might dis-
pose,

I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he'll say at my presenting!

Charles [who has signed them]. There!
About the warrants! You've my signa-
ture

What turns you pale? I do my duty by
you

In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'Ormea [reading them separately].

Arrest the people I suspected merely?

Charles. Did you suspect them?

D'Ormea. Doubtless: but — but — sir,

This Forquieri's governor of Turin,

And Rivarol and he have influence over 50

Half of the capital! Rabella, too?

Why, sir —

Charles. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'Ormea [still reading]. You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list?

Sir

Charles. But you never bade arrest
those men,

So close related to my father too,

On trifling grounds?

D'Ormea. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,

Is hatching treason! still —

[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What's
here?

Arrest the wife herself? 60

Charles. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?

D'Ormea [who has read the last paper].
Wherefore am I thus ruined? Why
not take

My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am
prepared

For all disgraces: only, let disgrace

Be plain, be proper — proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and
me!

Take back your warrant, I will none of it!

Charles. Here is a man to talk of fickle- 70
ness!

He stakes his life upon my father's false-
hood;

I bid him . . .

D'Ormea. Not you! Were he trebly
false,

You do not bid me . . .

Charles. Is't not written there?
I thought so: give — I'll set it right.

D'Ormea. Is it there?

Oh yes, and plain — arrest him now —
drag here

Your father! And were all six times as plain,

Do you suppose I trust it?

Charles. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.

D'Ormea. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?

Charles. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,

10 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord
'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last,
Oh I see! you arrive — this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man — wrings hasty
speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that's
noted;

Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude — examine
The day-by-day report of your paid spies —
20 And back you come: all was not ripe, you
find,

And, as you hope, may keep from ripening
yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 'twere
best

I never saw my father — these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without!
Polyxena. Charles —

Charles. Ah, no question!
You against me too!
You'd have me eat and drink and sleep,
live, die

With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you
say,

30 Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do — do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorise
These measures, and I will. Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*] Count —
You and Solar, with all the force you
have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he
bids,

Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that's likeliest one

40 At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself, — but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you
blame

So oft, shall be revoked — rights exercised,
Too long abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now sir, about the
work!

To save your king and country! Take the
warrant!

D'Ormea. You hear the sovereign's
mandate, Count Perugia?

Obeys me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Moncagliere!

Charles [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea!
[*D'ORMEA goes.*]

He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
[*To POLYXENA, after a pause.*]

At least you understand all this?
Polyxena. These means

Of our defence — these measures of pre-
caution?

Charles. It must be the best way; I
should have else

Withered beneath his scorn.

Polyxena. What would you say?

Charles. Why, do you think I mean to
keep the crown,

Polyxena?
Polyxena. You then believe the story

In spite of all — that Victor comes?
Charles. Believe it?

I know that he is coming — feel the
strength

That has upheld me leave me at his 60
coming!

'Twas mine, and now he takes his own
again.

Some kinds of strength are well enough to
have;

But who's to have that strength? Let my
crown go!

I meant to keep it; but I cannot — cannot!
Only, he shall not taunt me — he, the
first . . .

See if he would not be the first to taunt me
With having left his kingdom at a word.
With letting it be conquered without stroke,
With . . . no — no — 'tis no worse than
when he left!

I've just to bid him take it, and, that over, 70
We'll fly away — fly, for I loathe this

Turin,
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.

We'd best go to your country — unless God
Send I die now!

Polyxena. Charles, hear me!

Charles. And again
Shall you be my Polyxena — you'll take
me

Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep
speaking!

I would not let you speak just now, for fear
You'd counsel me against him: but talk,
now,

As we two used to talk in blessed times
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me &
From this mad post above him!

Polyxena. I believe

We are undone, but from a different cause.

All your resources, down to the least guard,
Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the
while,

He act in concert with your father? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli —
Where find a better place for them?

Charles [pacing the room]. And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that's
done,

Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you
find there,

o To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom?
One that's false —

False — from the head's crown to the foot's
sole, false!

The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro'
him,

Saw that he meant this while he crowned
me, while

He prayed for me, — nay, while he kissed
my brow,

I saw —

Polyxena. But if your measures take
effect,

o D'Ormea true to you?

Charles. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on
him!

Well may the woman taunt him with his
child —

I, eating here his bread, clothed in his
clothes,

Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
To outrage him! We talk — perchance
he tears

My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be
there,

He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds
him!

The crowded chamber when the lights go
out —

o Closed doors — the horrid scuffle in the
dark —

The accursed prompting of the minute!
My guards!

To horse — and after, with me — and
prevent!

Polyxena [seizing his hand]. King
Charles! Pause here upon this strip
of time

Allotted you out of eternity!

Crowns are from God: you in his name
hold yours.

Your life's no least thing, were it fit your
life

Should be abjured along with rule; but
now,

Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule —
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's 4c
charge, —

Ay, you would have men's praise, this
Rivoli

Would be illumined! While, as 'tis, no
doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on you;
No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you
could

Have done, no doubt, — nor do I much
expect

Future achievement will blot out the past,
Envelope it in haze — nor shall we two

Live happy any more. 'Twill be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty's seen 5c

As palpably as now: the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-
rooms

Pregnant with memories of the past: your
eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort
there,

Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,

We might have taken this great night: such
bear,

As I will bear! What matters happiness?
Duty! There's man's one moment: this is 6c
yours!

*[Putting the crown on his head, and the
sceptre in his hand, she places him
on his seat: a long pause and silence.]*

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR, with Guards.

Victor. At last I speak; but once —
that once, to you!

'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who's King of us?

Charles [from his seat]. Count Tende . . .
Victor. What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say —
Here to your face, amid your guards! I

choose
To take again the crown whose shadow I

gave —
For still its potency surrounds the weak

White locks their felon hands have discom-
posed.

Or I'll not ask who's King, but simply,
who

Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it! 7c
I have no friend in the wide world: nor

France
Nor England cares for me: you see the sum

Of what I can avail. Deliver it!
Charles. Take it, my father!

And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father — sure not

well,

- To try me thus! I might have seen much
cause
For keeping it — too easily seen cause!
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing, — her sunk eyes
Were happy once! No doubt, my people
think
I am their King still . . . but I cannot
strive!
Take it!
*Victor [one hand on the crown CHARLES
offers, the other on his neck].* So few
years give it quietly.
- 10 My son! It will drop from me. See you
not?
A crown's unlike a sword to give away —
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand
give!
But crowns should slip from palsied brows
to heads
Young as this head: yet mine is weak
enough,
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for
phrases
To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!
All is alike gone by with me — who beat
Once D'Orleans in his lines — his very
lines!
To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis's
rival,
- 20 And now . . .
*Charles [putting the crown on him, to
the rest].* The King speaks, yet none
kneels, I think!
Victor. I am then King! As I became
a King
Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me. I have lasted Europe's time.
What wants my story of completion?
Where
Must needs the damning break show?
Who mistrusts
My children here — tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
- 30 D'Ormea there!
Charles. What means he?
Victor. Ever there!
Charles — how to save your story!
Mine must go.
Say — say that you refused the crown to
me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You
immured
- Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die.
That will serve every purpose — tell that
tale
The world!
Charles. Mistrust me? Help!
Victor. Past help, past reach!
'Tis in the heart — you cannot reach the
heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you,
Charles,
Would have denied me and disgraced me. 40
Polyxena. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up
yourself
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to
you,
'Twas from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you —
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that
account;
But so it was.
Charles [to POLYXENA]. I love you now
indeed.
[*To VICTOR.*] You never knew me. 50
Victor. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.
If 'twere to do again! That's idly
wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead?
Yes:
I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep
lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping
off.
No matter. Guile has made me King
again.
Louis — 'twas in King Victor's time: — 60
long since,
When Louis reigned and, also, Victor
reigned.
How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?
Ha! Where lurks he?
D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now
stand!
[*Collecting his strength as*
D'ORMEA approaches.
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.
[*Dies.*

DRAMATIC LYRICS.

184- TO 185-.

CAVALIER TUNES.

I. MARCHING ALONG.

I.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament
swing:

And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk
droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II.

God for King Charles! Pym and such
carles

To the Devil that prompts 'em their
treasonous parles!

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,

Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're —

CHORUS. — *Marching along, fifty-
score strong,*

*Great-hearted gentlemen,
singing this song.*

III.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry
as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

CHORUS. — *Marching along, fifty-
score strong,*

*Great-hearted gentlemen,
singing this song?*

IV.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and
his snarls

To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent
carles!

Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the
fight,

CHORUS. — *March we along, fifty-
score strong,*

*Great-hearted gentlemen,
singing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right
now?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
now?

Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II.

Who gave me the goods that went since? 30

Who raised me the house that sank once?

Who helped me to gold I spent since?

Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHORUS. — *King Charles, and who'll
do him right now?*

*King Charles, and who's
ripe for fight now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in
hell's despite now,*

King Charles!

III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?

For whom did he cheer and laugh else, 40

While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHORUS. — *King Charles, and who'll
do him right now?*

*King Charles, and who's
ripe for fight now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in
hell's despite now,*

King Charles!

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Rescue my castle before the hot day

Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

CHORUS. — *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away!*

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say; 50

Many's the friend there, will listen and
pray

"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Round-heads' array:

Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
"Nay!

"I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

10 CHORUS. — "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat —
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,

Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,

So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!

Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,

20 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,

— He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence;

Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;

Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,

30 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,

One task more declined, one more foot-path untrod,

One more devils' triumph and sorrow for angels,

One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!

Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,

Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,

Never glad confident morning again!

Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,

Menace our heart ere we master his 40 own;

Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,

Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX."

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;

"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gatebolts undrew;

"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,

And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace

Neck by neck, stride by stride, never 50 changing our place;

I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,

Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,

Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near

Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;

At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;

At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could
be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we
heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is
time!"

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black
every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping
past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at
last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its
spray:

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp
ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on
his track;
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever
that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master,
askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which
aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping
on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried
Joris, "Stay spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's
not in her,
"We'll remember at Aix" — for one heard
the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and
staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the
flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered
and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in
the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless
laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright
stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang
white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is
in sight!"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us!" — and all in a
moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as
a stone;

And there was my Roland to bear the 30
whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix
from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to
the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets'
rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster
let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt
and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his
ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse
without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any
noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped
and stood.

X.

And all I remember is — friends flocking 40
round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on
the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland
of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last
measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common
consent)
Was no more than his due who brought
good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO
ABD-EL-KADR.

[Abd-el-Kadr was an Arab Chief of
Algiers who resisted the French in 1833.]

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed, 50
He in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied —
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unspied 60
As I ride, as I ride?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside — where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and
dried,
— Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
How has viad stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hied
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that's meant me — satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS.

I.

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and
shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French
lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling
South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,

Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-
feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could
abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to all the
beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh
but the bolder:
And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly
jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strut-
ting!

Here's to Nelson's memory!
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever — any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much:
Here's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it
go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the
beholder
To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the
shoulder:
"For he used to lean with one shoulder
digging,
"Jigging, as it were, and zig zag-zigging
"Up against the mizen-rigging!"

GARDEN FANCIES.

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME.

Here's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them
wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she
turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket
swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot
spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed
the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white
phlox.

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants
lie!

III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its
claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no
slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow
not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not:
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they
nestle —
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it
with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
— Ah, you may flout and turn up your
faces —
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in his time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbutue and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge; 50
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he'd be private, there might he
spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend. 60

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
— At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings
stagnate:
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's
magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis:
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in 70
limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus latis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and 80
glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their
tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this
fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all
over,

And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
 Came in, each one, for his right of
 trover?
 — When the water-beetle with great blind
 deaf face
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the
 preface
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII.

All that life and fun and romping,
 All that frisking and twisting and
 coupling,
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were
 swamping
 And clasps were cracking and covers
 suppling!
 As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or
 Munich,
 Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the ballet with trousers
 and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough
 is it?
 Back to my room shall you take your
 sweet self.
 Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-*eft*,
sufficit!
 See the snug niche I have made on my
 shelf!
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall
 cover you,
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be
 gay,
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over
 you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH
CLOISTER.

I.

GR-R-R — there go, my heart's abhorrence!
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill
 you!
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims —
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II.

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
 Wise talk of the-kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year:

*Not a plenteous-cork-crop: scarcely
 Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
 What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
 What's the Greek name for Swine's
 Snout?*

III.

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps —
 Marked with L. for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV.

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
 — Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he'd let it show!)

V.

When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.
 I the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp —
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

VI.

Oh, those melons? If he's able
 We're to have a feast! so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None double
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange! — And I, too, at such trouble,
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII.

There's a great text in Galatians,
 Once you trip on it, entails
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
 One sure, if another fails:
 If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:

If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

IX.

Or, there's Satan! — one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r — you swine!

THE LABORATORY.

ANCIEN RÉGIME.

I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling
whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-
smithy —
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II.

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe
my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled
to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them! —
I am here.

III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy
paste,
Pound at thy powder, — I am not in haste!
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange
things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at
the King's.

IV.

That in the mortar — you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oo-
zings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly, — is that poison too?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treas-
ures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty min-
utes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her
head
And her breast and her arms and her
hands, should drop dead!

VII.

Quick — is it finished? The colour's too
grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and
dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and
stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer! 40

VIII.

What a drop! She's not little, no minion
like me!
That's why she ensnared him: this never
will free
The soul from those masculine eyes, —
say, "no!"
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I
brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I
thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed
she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it
all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain: 50
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace —
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be
not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's
fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your
fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth
if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it
brings
Ere I know it — next moment I dance at 60
the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

I.

It is a lie — their Priests, their Pope,
 Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or
 hope
 Are lies, and lies — there! through my
 door
 And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
 There, lies, they lie — shall still be hurled
 Till spite of them I reach the world!

II.

You think Priests just and holy men!
 Before, they put me in this den
 I was a human creature too,
 10 With flesh and blood like one of you,
 A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
 Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover — shame avaunt!
 This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
 Was kissed all over till it burned,
 By lips the truest, love e'er turned
 His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
 My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train
 20 Of things grew round my sense again,
 "That is a sin," I said: and slow
 With downcast eyes to church I go,
 And pass to the confession-chair,
 And tell the old mild father there.

V.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
 "Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
 "The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
 "Despair not — strenuously retrieve!
 30 "Nay, I will turn this love of thine
 "To lawful love, almost divine;

VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,
 "This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
 "To change the laws of church and state;
 "So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
 "Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
 "Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
 "Thou mayst demand and be possessed
 "Of all his plans, and next day steal
 40 "To me, and all those plans reveal,
 "That I and every priest, to purge
 "His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,
 With love and truth his brow seemed
 bright;
 I went back, all on fire with joy,
 And, that same evening, bade the boy
 Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
 Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell
 For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
 And I lay listening in such pride!
 50 And, soon as he had left my side,
 Tripped to the church by morning-light
 To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,
 Who were his comrades, what their
 dreams;
 "And now make haste," I said, "to pray
 "The one spot from his soul away;
 "To-night he comes, but not the same
 60 "Will look!" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
 I went forth with a strength new-born.
 The church was empty; something drew
 My steps into the street; I knew
 It led me to the market-place:
 Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

XII.

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
 That stapled block . . . God sink the rest!
 That head strapped back, that blinding
 vest,
 Those knotted hands and naked breast, 70
 Till near one busy hangman pressed,
 And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear!
 No heaven with them, no hell! — and here,
 No earth, not so much space as pens
 My body in their worst of dens
 But shall bear God and man my cry,
 Lies — lies, again — and still, they lie!

CRISTINA.

I.

SHE should never have looked at me
 If she meant I should not love her! 80
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
 I suppose . . . she may discover

All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
What her look said! — no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
"Of some lone shore with its pearl seed.
"That the sea feels" — no "strange
yearning
"That such souls have, most to lavish
"Where there's chance of least return-
ing."

III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
◆ Mine and her souls rushed together?

VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision

Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture! 54
— Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture!

VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended. 60

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
— You know the red turns grey.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dear-
est?
May I take your hand in mine? 70
Mere friends are we, — well, friends the
merest
Keep much that I resign:

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and
black,
Though I keep with heart's endeav-
our, —
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops
back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever! —

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer! 80

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the
sods

Have struggled through its binding osier
rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean
awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-
by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er
plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name
and date!

LOVE.

So, the year's done with!
(*Love me for ever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
10 May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever —
(*Love me for ever!*)

MEETING AT NIGHT.

I.

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
20 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and
fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's
rim:

And straight was a path of gold for him,
30 And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG.

I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught — speak truth — above
her?

Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world
over:

Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught — speak truth — 40
above her?

Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

I.

LET's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
— Only sleep!

II.

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III.

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV.

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree —

V.

Where the apple reddens
Never pry —
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI.

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought —

VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

x.

— Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-
flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's
chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my
name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew —
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so
wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be
told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's
sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a
few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come, — at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I
shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's
red —
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's
stead.

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since
then,
Given up myself so many times, 58
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold? —
There was place and to spare for the frank
young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's 60
young gold.
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and
understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening
smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray
or stop —
As they crop — 70
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils,
wielding far
Peace or war.

II.

Now, — the country does not even boast
a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain
rills
From the hills 84

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot
its spires

Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor
be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of
grass

Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-
spreads

And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone —
Where a multitude of men breathed joy
and woe

Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up,
dread of shame

Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the
gold
Bought and sold.

IV.

Now, — the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of
blossom winks

Through the chinks —
Marks the basement whence a tower in
ancient time

Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots
traced

As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his
dames

Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured
eve

Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling
fleece

In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished
grey

Melt away —
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there

In the turret whence the charioteers caught
soul

For the goal,

When the king looked, where she looks
now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all
the glades'

Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, —
and then,

All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she
will stand,

Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first
embrace

Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and
speech

Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters
forth

South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar
high

As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full
force —

Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood
that burns!

Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and
the rest!

Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

OH, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!

All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II.

Runnels, which rillelets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed

Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago!
 When we lived blocked up with snow, —
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go —
 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so!

IV.

Laughs with so little cause!
 We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
 In the ash, as an artist draws;
 Free on each other's flaws,
 How we chattered like two church daws!

V.

What's in the "Times"? — a scold
 At the Emperor deep and cold;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold:
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 And — to break now and then the screen —
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII.

Try, will our table turn?
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips
 Thro' the finger-tips
 In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn!

VIII.

Then we would up and pace,
 For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck:
 'Tis our quarter-deck,
 We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space!
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, dressed
 In a sledging-cap and vest!
 'Tis a huge fur cloak —
 Like a reindeer's yoke
 Falls the lappet along the breast:
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
 As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
 And you turn into such a man!
 Just the two spots that span
 Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
 When the mesmeriser Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep:
 'Twas a time when the heart could show
 All — how was earth to know,
 'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
 When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same
 Till an evening came
 When a shaft from the devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
 And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath —
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
 See a word, how it severeth!
 Oh, power of life and death
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
 For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You, —
 Since, as truth is true,
 I was You all the happy past —
 Me do you leave aghast
 With the memories We amassed?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
 That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true
 And the beauteous and the right, —
 Bear with a moment's spite
 When a mere mote threatens the white!

XVI.

What of a hasty word?
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick?
 See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred —
 Ear, when a straw is heard
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
 More or less, how can I care?
 'Tis the world the same
 For my praise or blame,
 And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare —
 Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,
 When the almond-blossom blows:
 10 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
 There is none but the cuckoo knows:
 Heaps of the guilder-rose!
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 Of his driver's-lash —
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 20 Facing the castle glum
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX.

Then, were the world well stripped
 Of the gear wherein equipped
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
 In the sun, with the flowers unripped, —
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
 We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
 30 "But one freezes here! and why?"
 "When a heart, as chill,
 "At my own would thrill
 "Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
 "Heart, shall we live or die?
 "The rest, . . . settle by-and-by!"

XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,
 And forgive me as before.
 It is twelve o'clock:
 I shall hear her knock
 40 In the worst of a storm's uproar,
 I shall pull her through the door,
 I shall have her for evermore!

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON
 OF QUALITY.)

I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough
 and to spare,

The house for me, no doubt, were a house
 in the city-square;
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at
 the window there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something
 to hear, at least!
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a
 perfect feast;
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it,
 no more than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the
 horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the
 creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a
 leaf to pull!
 — I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if
 the hair's turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city — the square with
 the houses! Why?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd,
 there's something to take the eye!
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single
 front awry;
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who
 saunters, who hurries by;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw
 when the sun gets high;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are
 painted properly.

V.

What of a villa? Though winter be over
 in March by rights,
 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have
 withered well off the heights:
 You've the brown ploughed land before,
 where the oxen steam and wheeze,
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the
 faint grey olive-trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've
 summer all at once;
 In a day he leaps complete with a few
 strong April suns.
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce
 risen three fingers well,
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out
 its great red bell
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the
 children to pick and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a
 fountain to spout and splash!
 In the shade it sings and springs; in the
 shine such foam-bows flash.

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that
prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty
gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds
round her waist is a sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see
though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like
death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix
i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks
of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stun-
ning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine
round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the
months of the fever and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the dili-
gence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs
you never a pin.
By-and-by there's the travelling doctor
gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the
market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture —
the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three
liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most
fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his
lion, some little new law of the
Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the
Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint
Jerome and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhym-
ing,) "the skirts of Saint Paul has
reached,
"Having preached us those six Lent-lect-
ures more unctuous than ever he
preached."
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the proces-
sion! our Lady borne smiling and
smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and
seven swords stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-
te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the
greatest pleasure in life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls,
wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt,
and what oil pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa 30
for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but
still — ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the
monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts,
a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and
another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear,
for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-
te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no
such pleasure in life!

A TOCCATA¹ OF GALUPPI'S.

[Galuppi was a famous Italian composer
of the eighteenth century. He was in
London from 1741 to 1744.]

I.

Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad
to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would
prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis 40
with such a heavy mind!

II.

Here you come with your old music, and
here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where
the merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges
used to wed the sea with rings?

III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and
'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England — it's as if I
saw it all.

IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when
the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burn-
ing ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for
the morrow, do you say?

¹ An overture — a touch piece.

v.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round
and lips so red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a
bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where
a man might base his head?

vi.

Well, and it was graceful of them — they'd
break talk off and afford
— She, to bite her mask's black velvet —
he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
at the clavichord?

vii.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions,
those solutions — "Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths — "Life
might last! we can but try!"

viii.

10 "Were you happy?" — "Yes." — "And
are you still as happy?" — "Yes.
And you?"
— "Then, more kisses!" — "Did I stop
them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it
must be answered to!

ix.

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they
praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good
alike at grave and gay!"
"I can always leave off talking when I hear
a master play!"

x.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till
in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some
with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where
they never see the sun.

xi.

But when I sit down to reason, think to
take my stand nor swerve,
20 While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from
nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I
creep thro' every nerve.

xii.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking
where a house was burned:

"Dust and ashes, dead and done with,
Venice spent what Venice earned.
"The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where
a soul can be discerned.

xiii.

"Yours for instance: you know physics,
something of geology,
"Mathematics are your pastime; souls
shall rise in their degree;
"Butterflies may dread extinction, —
you'll not die, it cannot be!

xiv.

"As for Venice and her people, merely born
to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop:
"What of soul was left, I wonder, when the
kissing had to stop?

xv.

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and
I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too —
what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I
feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

i.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they
say:
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and
wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

ii.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

iii.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you
so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows
know!

I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf which they never
shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like
moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her
men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive —
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
— With the chapter-room, the cloister-
porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-
tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the
brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
— A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient
Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs
to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and
buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old
scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls — can
they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the little
wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,

Not dreaming that Old and New are
fellows:

A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from
Dellos.

IX.

And here where your praise might yield
returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff gins
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry, 54
Called Nature's Ape and the world's
despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

X.

There stands the Master. Study, my
friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he
plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then,
sic transit!
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy, —
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their
neighbour!
'Tis looking downward that makes one 64
dizzy.

XI.

"If you knew their work you would deal
your dole."
May I take upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast in
fructu —
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs
betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informers) made new in
marble.

XII.

So, you saw yourself as you wished you
were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be; 76
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues'
godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full
sway,
And your little grace, by their grace em-
bodied,
And your little date, by their forms that
stay.

XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.

You would prove a model? The Son of
Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and
knees' use.
You're wroth — can you slay your snake
like Apollo?
You're grieved — still Niobe's the
grander!
You live — there's the Racers' frieze to
follow:
You die — there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded
beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and
length,
10 You learned — to submit is a mortal's
duty.
— When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a
whole,
And grow here according to God's clear
plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on
them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine
day
And cried with a start — What if we so
small
Be greater and grander, the while than
they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of
stature?
20 In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and
more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall
never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time
in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise
polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once in-
vested
30 With all they can teach, we shall see
them abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be
leaven —
The better! What's come to perfection
perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall practise
in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most
cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)
"O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be
hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's 40
minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and ac-
tion
Than joy which is crystallised for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early
painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more
wish you?" —
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
"And paint man man, whatever the 50
issue!"
"Make new hopes shine through the flesh
they fray,
"New fears aggrandise the rags and
tatters:
"To bring the invisible full into play!
"Let the visible go to the dogs — what
matters?"

XX.

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and
glory
For daring so much, before they well
did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 'tis no idle
quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknow- 60
ledge,
Why, honour them now! (ends my allocu-
tion)
Nor confer your degree when the folk
leave college.

XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others
hate —
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses
and wins:
Where the strong and the weak this
world's congeries,

Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is
heaven's serene, —
When our faith in the same has stood the
test —
Why, the child grown man, you burn the
rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of
God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo¹ the Pisan,
My painter — who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti² and Ghirlandajo,³
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance — heigh
ho!

XXIV.

heir ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
locked up, knocked out, or whitewashed
o'er:
— No getting again what the church
has grasped!
he works on the wall must take their
chance;
"Works never conceded to England's
thick clime!"
hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV.

hen they go at length, with such a shak-
ing
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
ach master his way through the black
streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though
badly —
hy don't they bethink them of who has
merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
ch doom, how a captive might be out-
ferreted?
Why is it they never remember me?

¹ A sculptor, died 1278.
² Died 1455. Designed the bronze gates of
the Baptistery at Florence.
³ A painter, died 1498.

XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor the wronged Lippino;⁴ and not a
word I
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,⁵ 46
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,⁶
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a
sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo,⁷ the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the
draughtsman?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera⁸
crumbly —
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti 50
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,⁹
With the grave-clothes garb and swad-
dling barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed
parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the
donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little
honour.

XXIX.

They pass; for them the panels may thrill, 60
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the
English,
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their
prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX.

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town tongues
babble it, —

⁴ The son of Fra Lippo Lippi. Wronged,
because some of his pictures have been attributed
to others.

⁵ Died 1366. One of Giotto's pupils and
assistants.

⁶ Rough cast.

⁷ Painter, sculptor, and goldsmith.

⁸ Distemper — mixture of water and egg yolk.

⁹ Sculptor and architect, died 1313.

Oh, never! it shall not be counted true —
 That a certain precious little tablet
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, —
 Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
 And, left for another than I to discover,
 Turns up at last! and to whom? — to
 whom?

XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti¹?)
 Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
 10 Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
 My Koh-i-noor — or (if that's a platitude)
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's
 eye;
 So, in anticipative gratitude,
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII.

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain
 dotard
 Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoic-
 ing,
 To the worse side of the Mont Saint
 Gothard,
 We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
 None of that shooting the sky (blank car-
 tridge),
 20 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and
 lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

This time we'll shoot better game and bag
 'em hot —
 No mere display at the stone of Dante,
 But a kind of sober Witanagemot
 (Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to
 Florence,
 How Art may return that departed
 with her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the
 Loraine's,
 30 And bring us the days of Orgagna²
 hither!

XXXIV.

How we shall prologise, how we shall
 perorate,
 Utter fit things upon art and history,
 Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at
 zero rate,
 Make of the want of the age no mystery;
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
 Show — monarchy ever its uncouth cub
 licks
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the re-
 public's.

¹ All Saints.² A Florentine painter, died 1576.

XXXV.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt
 Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an
 "issimo,")
 To end now our half-told tale of Cam-
 buscan,³
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*:
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia⁴
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, un-
 baffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the
 spire
 While "God and the People" plain for its
 motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the
 sky?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

"DE GUSTIBUS——."

I.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say, —
 The happier they!
 Draw yourself up from the light of the
 moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June!

II.

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands) —
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress —
 stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crustured,
 My sentinel to guard the sands

³ Tartar king.⁴ A woodcock.

To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
— She hopes they have not caught the
felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me —

(When fortune's malice

Lost her — Calais) —

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, "Italy."

Such lovers old are I and she:

So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-
wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
bough
In England — now!

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the
swallows!
Iark, where my blossomed pear-tree in
the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent
spray's edge —
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song
twice over,
Nest you should think he never could re-
capture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with
hoary dew,
It will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-
flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

Oh, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the
North-west died away;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reek-
ing into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face
Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-east distance
dawned Gibraltar grand and grey;
"Here and here did England help me: how
can I help England?" — say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God
to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent
over Africa.

SAUL.

I.

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere
I tell, ere thou speak,
"Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I
wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for 50
thy countenance sent,
"Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor
until from his tent
"Thou return with the joyful assurance the
King liveth yet,
"Shall our lip with the honey be bright,
with the water be wet.
"For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a
space of three days,
"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,
of prayer nor of praise,
"To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have
ended their strife,
"And that, faint in his triumph, the mon-
arch sinks back upon life.

II.

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved!
God's child with his dew
"On thy gracious gold hair, and those
lilies still living and blue
"Just broken to twine round thy harp- 60
strings, as if no wild heat
"Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and
rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.
The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and
under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-
patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I
groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and
was not afraid

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!"

And no voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness;
but soon I descried

A something more black than the blackness
— the vast, the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion:
and slow into sight

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and
blackest of all.

Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-
roof, showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both
arms stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre,
that goes to each side;

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as,
caught in his pangs

10 And waiting his change, the king-serpent
all heavily hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till
deliverance come

With the spring-time, — so agonised Saul,
drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V.

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the
lilies we twine round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-
tide — those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep
know, as, one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door till
folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes,
for lo, they have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water
within the stream's bed;

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as
star follows star

20 Into eve and the blue far above us, — so
blue and so far!

VI.

— Then the tune, for which quails on the
cornland will each leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes
the crickets elate

Till for boldness they fight one another:
and then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa¹ a-musing outside
his sand house —

There are none such as he for a wonder,
half bird and half mouse!

God made all the creatures and gave them
our love and our fear,

To give sign, we and they are his children,
one family here.

¹ The jumping hare.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
their wine-song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts expand

And grow one in the sense of this world's
life. — And then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his
journey — "Bear, bear him along

"With his few faults shut up like dead
flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here

"To console us? The land has none left
such as he on the bier.

"Oh, would we might keep thee, my
brother!" — And then, the glad

chaunt

Of the marriage, — first go the young
maidens, next, she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. —
And then, the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him
and buttress an arch

Nought can break; who shall harm them,
our friends? — Then, the chorus in-
toned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned.

But I stopped here: for here in the dark-
ness Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such
silence, and listened apart;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul
shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at
once with a start,

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
courageous at heart.

So the head: but the body still moved not,
still hung there erect.

And I bent once again to my playing,
pursued it unchecked,

As I sang, —

IX.

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour!
No spirit feels waste,

"Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor
sineu unbraced.

"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping
from rock up to rock,

"The strong rending of boughs from the
fir-tree, the cool silver shock

"Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the
hunt of the bear,

"And the sultriness showing the lion is
couched in his lair.

"And the meal, the rich dates yellowed
over with gold dust divine,

"And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher
the full draught of wine,

"And the sleep in the dried river-channel
 where bulrushes tell
 "That the water was wont to go warbling
 so softly and well.
 "How good is man's life, the mere living!
 how fit to employ
 "All the heart and the soul and the senses
 for ever in joy!
 "Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
 father, whose sword thou didst guard
 "When he trusted thee forth with the
 armies, for glorious reward?
 "Didst thou see the thin hands of thy
 mother, held up as men sung
 "The low song of the nearly-departed, and
 hear her faint tongue
 "Joining in while it could to the witness,
 'Let one more attest,
 "'I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a
 lifetime, and all was for best?'
 "Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
 triumph, not much, but the rest.
 "And thy brothers, the help and the con-
 test, the working whence grew
 "Such result as, from seething grape-
 bundles, the spirit strained true:
 "And the friends of thy boyhood — that
 boyhood of wonder and hope,
 "Present promise and wealth of the future
 beyond the eye's scope, —
 "Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a
 people is thine;
 "And all gifts, which the world offers
 singly, on one head combine!
 "On one head, all the beauty and
 strength, love and rage (like the throe
 "That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour
 and lets the gold go)
 "High ambition and deeds which surpass
 it, fame crowning them, — all
 "Brought to blaze on the head of one
 creature — King Saul!"

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, —
 heart, hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow,
 each bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for —
 as when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service,
 strains through its array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot —
 "Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow.
 Then Saul, who hung propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the centre,
 wast struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-
 mons goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand
 her, that held (he alone,

While the vale laughed in freedom and
 flowers) on a broad bust of stone
 A year's snow bound about for a breast-
 plate, — leaves grasp of the sheet?
 Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-
 ously down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but
 alive yet, your mountain of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeathings
 of ages untold —
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,
 each furrow and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the
 tempest — all hail, there they are!
 — Now again to be softened with verdure,
 again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young
 to the green on his crest
 For their food in the arduous of summer. 40
 One long shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then
 sank and was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me,
 released and aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to
 traverse, 'twixt hope and despair;
 Death was past, life not come: so he
 waited. Awhile his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
 vacant forthwith to remand
 To their place what new objects should
 enter: 'twas Saul as before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,
 nor was hurt any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye
 watch from the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean — a
 sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, 50
 o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more in-
 tensely: so, arm folded arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-
 sided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me)
 what next should I urge
 To sustain him where song had restored
 him? — Song filled to the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing
 all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
 beauty: beyond, on what fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect
 to brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend
 them the cup they put by?
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not:
 he lets me praise life,
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own 60
 part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture,
when round me the sheep
Fed in silence — above, the one eagle
wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the
world that might lie
'Neath his kén, though I saw but the strip
'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed — "Since my days are or-
dained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fancies,
the plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix with,
and image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those fashions
I hardly shall know!
10 "Schemes of life, its best rules and right
uses, the courage that gains,
"And the prudence that keeps what men
strive for." And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew
surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as
thus —

XIII.

"Yea, my King,"
I began — "thou dost well in rejecting
mere comforts that spring
"From the mere mortal life held in com-
mon by man and by brute:
"In our flesh grows the branch of this life,
in our soul it bears fruit.
"Thou hast marked the slow rise of the
tree, — how its stem trembled first
"Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's
antler; then safely outburst
"The fan-branches all round; and thou
mindest when these too, in turn
20 "Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
perfect: yet more was to learn,
"E'en the good that comes in with the
palm-fruit. Our dates shall we
slight,
"When their juice brings a cure for all
sorrow? or care for the plight
"Of the palm's self whose slow growth
produced them? Not so! stem and
branch
"Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
while the palm-wine shall staunch
"Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I
pour thee such wine.
"Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!
the spirit be thine!
"By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome
thee, thou still shalt enjoy
"More indeed, than at first when incon-
scious, the life of a boy.
"Crush that life, and behold its wine
running! Each deed thou hast done

"Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
until e'en as the sun
"Looking down on the earth, though
clouds spoil him, though tempests
efface,
"Can find nothing his own deed produced
not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer-prime, —
so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
long over, shall thrill
"Thy whole people, the countless, with
ardour, till they too give forth
"A like cheer to their sons, who in turn,
fill the South and the North
"With the radiance thy deed was the germ
of. Carouse in the past!
"But the license of age has its limit; thou
diest at last:
"As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the
rose at her height
"So with man — so his power and his
beauty for ever take flight.
"No! Again a long draught of my soul-
wine! Look forth o'er the years!
"Thou hast done now with eyes for the
actual; begin with the seer's!
"Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale
make his tomb — bid arise
"A grey mountain of marble heaped four-
square, till, built to the skies,
"Let it mark where the great First King
slumbers: whose fame would ye
know?
"Up above see the rock's naked face, where
the record shall go
"In great characters cut by the scribe, —
Such was Saul, so he did;
"With the sages directing the work, by the
populace chid, —
"For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised
there! Which fault to amend,
"In the grove with his kind grows the
cedar, whereon they shall spend
"(Sec, in tablets 'tis level before them)
their praise, and record
"With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,
— the statesman's great word
"Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
ment. The river's a-wave
"With smooth paper-reeds grazing each
other when prophet-winds rave:
"So the pen gives unborn generations their
due and their part
"In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,
thank God that thou art!"

XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou
who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy
help to essay,

Carry on and complete an adventure, —
 my shield and my sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant,
 thy word was my word, —
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of
 human endeavour
 And scaling the highest, man's thought
 could, gazed hopeless as ever
 On the new stretch of heaven above me —
 till, mighty to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that dis-
 tance — God's throne from man's
 grave!
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my
 voice to my heart
 Which can scarce dare believe in what
 marvels last night I took part,
 As this morning I gather the fragments,
 alone with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish
 like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while
 Hebron¹ upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his
 shoulder, and Kidron² retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv.

I say then, — my song
 While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,
 and ever more strong
 Made a proffer of good to console him —
 he slowly resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The
 right-hand replumed
 His black locks to their wonted composure,
 adjusted the swathes
 Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat
 that his countenance bathes,
 He wipes off with the robe; and he girds
 now his loins as of yore,
 And feels slow for the armlets of price, with
 the clasp set before.
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere
 error had bent
 The broad brow from the daily commun-
 ion; and still, though much spent
 Be the life and the bearing that front you,
 the same, God did choose,
 To receive what a man may waste, dese-
 crate, never quite lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till,
 stayed by the pile
 Of his armour and war-cloak and garments,
 he leaned there awhile,
 And sat out my singing, — one arm round
 the tent-prop, to raise
 His bent head, and the other hung slack —
 till I touched on the praise
 I foresaw from all men in all time, to the
 man patient there;

* One of the six cities of refuge.

* A brook near Jerusalem.

And thus ended, the harp falling forward. 30
 Then first I was 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just
 above his vast knees
 Which were thrust out on each side around
 me, like oak-roots which please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I
 looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace:
 he spoke not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he
 laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on
 my brow: thro' my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent
 back my head, with kind power, —
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men
 do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes
 that scrutinised mine —
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! 40
 but where was the sign?
 I yearned — "Could I help thee, my father,
 inventing a bliss,
 "I would add, to that life of the past, both
 the future and this;
 "I would give thee new life altogether, as
 good, ages hence,
 "As this moment, — had love but the
 warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

xvi.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
 more — no song more! outbroke —

xvii.

"I have gone the whole round of creation:
 I saw and I spoke:
 "I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,
 received in my brain
 "And pronounced on the rest of his hand-
 work — returned him again
 "His creation's approval or censure: I
 spoke as I saw:
 "I report, as a man may of God's work — 50
 all's love, yet all's law.
 "Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.
 Each faculty tasked
 "To perceive him, has gained an abyss,
 where a dewdrop was asked.
 "Have I knowledge? confounded it
 shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
 "Have I forethought? how purblind, how
 blank, to the Infinite Care!
 "Do I task any faculty highest, to image
 success?
 "I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no
 more and no less,
 "In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me,
 and God is seen God
 "In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the
 soul and the clod,

- "And thus looking within and around me,
I ever renew
"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending
upraises it too)
"The submission of man's nothing-perfect
to God's all-complete,
"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I
climb to his feet.
"Yet with all this abounding experience,
this deity known,
"I shall dare to discover some province,
some gift of my own.
"There's a faculty pleasant to exercise,
hard to hoodwink,
"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I
laugh as I think)
"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it,
wot ye, I worst
10 "E'en the Giver in one gift. — Behold, I
could love if I durst!
"But I sink the pretension as fearing a
man may o'ertake
"God's own speed in the one way of love:
I abstain for love's sake.
"— What, my soul? see thus far and no
farther? when doors great and small,
"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch,
should the hundredth appal?
"In the least things have faith, yet distrust
in the greatest of all?
"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's
ultimate gift,
"That I doubt his own love can compete
with it? Here, the parts shift?
"Here, the creature surpass the Creator, —
the end, what Began?
"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do
all for this man,
20 "And dare doubt he alone shall not help
him, who yet alone can?
"Would it ever have entered my mind, the
bare will, much less power,
"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of,
the marvellous dower
"Of the life he was gifted and filled with?
to make such a soul,
"Such a body, and then such an earth for
insphering the whole?
"And doth it not enter my mind (as my
warm tears attest)
"These good things being given, to go on,
and give one more, the best?
"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,
maintain at the height
"This perfection, — succeed with life's
day-spring, death's minute of night?
"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch
Saul the mistake,
30 "Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, —
and bid him awake
"From the dream, the probation, the
prelude, to find himself set
"Clear and safe in new light and new life,
— a new harmony yet
- "To be run, and continued, and ended —
who knows? — or endure!
"The man taught enough, by life's dream,
of the rest to make sure;
"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
intensified bliss,
"And the next world's reward and repose,
by the struggles in this.
- XVIII.
- "I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest,
'tis I who receive:
"In the first is the last, in thy will is my
power to believe.
"All's one gift: thou canst grant it more-
over, as prompt to my prayer
"As I breathe out this breath, as I open 49
these arms to the air.
"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and
nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
"I will? — the mere atoms despise me!
Why am I not loth
"To look that, even that in the face too?
Why is it I dare
"Think but lightly of such impuissance?
What stops my despair?
"This; — 'tis not what man Does which
exalts him, but what man Would
do!
"See the King — I would help him but
cannot, the wishes fall through.
"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,
grow poor to enrich,
"To fill up his life, starve my own out, I
would — knowing which,
"I know that my service is perfect. Oh,
speak through me now!
"Would I suffer for him that I love? So 50
wouldst thou — so wilt thou!
"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffa-
blest, uttermost crown —
"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor
leave up nor down
"One spot for the creature to stand in! It
is by no breath,
"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation
joins issue with death!
"As thy Love is discovered almighty, al-
mighty be proved
"Thy power, that exists with and for it, of
being Beloved!
"He who did most, shall bear most; the
strongest shall stand the most weak.
"Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry
for! my flesh, that I seek
"In the Godhead! I seek and I find it.
O Saul, it shall be
"A Face like my face that receives thee; a 60
Man like to me,
"Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever:
a Hand like this hand
"Shall throw open the gates of new life to
thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way
 home in the night.
 There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to
 left and to right,
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the
 alive, the aware:
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly,
 as strugglingly there,
 As a runner beset by the populace famished
 for news —
 Life or death. The whole earth was
 awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
 And the stars of night beat with emotion,
 and tingled and shot
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent know-
 ledge: but I fainted not,
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and
 supported, suppressed
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,
 and holy behest,
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the
 earth sank to rest.
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had
 withered from earth —
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the
 day's tender birth;
 In the gathered intensity brought to the
 grey of the hills;
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in
 the sudden wind-thrills;
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off,
 each with eye sidling still
 Though averted with wonder and dread;
 in the birds stiff and chill
 That rose heavily, as I approached them,
 made stupid with awe:
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent, —
 he felt the new law.
 The same stared in the white humid faces
 upturned by the flowers;
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar
 and moved the vine-bowers:
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured,
 persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed
 voices — "E'en so, it is so!"

MY STAR.

ALL that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue!
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower,
 hangs furled:

They must solace themselves with the
 Saturn above it.
 What matter to me if their star is a world?
 Mine has opened its soul to me; there-
 fore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark autumn-evenings
 come:
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb 40
 In life's November too!

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as besemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind
 blows
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose!

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on
 lip,
 "There he is at it, deep in Greek:
 "Now then, or never, out we slip
 "To cut from the hazels by the creek 50
 "A mainmast for our ship!"

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 And I pass out where it ends.

V.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
 But the inside-archway widens fast,
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last 60
 And youth, by green degrees.

VI.

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand:
 Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-
 lands,
 Laid to their hearts instead!

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge 70
 Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
10 When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-
flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in
showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit's
begun,
20 These early November hours,

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood; intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needed mat of moss,

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening — nay, in to-day's first
dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky
crew
30 Of toadstools peep indulged.

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched
bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant
pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;

Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

46

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered
homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams —

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low
shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman
stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers
spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

56

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt —

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain
show,
Dating — good thought of our archi-
tect's —
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

60

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at
times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

70

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with
them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth
drops,
One inch from life's safe hem!

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak
now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how —

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as
rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things
new,
When earth breaks up and heaven ex-
pands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX.

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI.

What did I say? — that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide
wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day
glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

53

XXXIII.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really
speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

60

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated
square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed
before,
Take the path again — but wait!

70

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite!
The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
How grey at once is the evening grown —
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we
heard,

The lights and the shades made up a
spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds
away!

How a sound shall quicken content to
bliss,

Or a breath suspend the blood's best
play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and
her:

10 I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends
confer,
Friends — lovers that might have been.

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-
time,

Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-
prime,

But bring to the last leaf no such test!
"Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,

20 Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can
mend:

But a last leaf — fear to touch!

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind — best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-
place

You tremble to forestall!

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
30 That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV.

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you
are,

And filled my empty heart at a word.

If two lives join, there is oft a scar, 40

They are one and one, with a shadowy
third;

One near one is too far.

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen

Were hanging the night around us fast;

But we knew that a bar was broken between

Life and life: we were mixed at last

In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII.

The forests had done it; there they stood;

We caught for a moment the powers at
play:

They had mingled us so, for once and good, 50

Their work was done — we might go or
stay,

They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us!

How all we perceive and know in it

Tends to some moment's product thus,

When a soul declares itself — to wit,

By its fruit, the thing it does!

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,

It forwards the general deed of man,

And each of the Many helps to recruit 50

The life of the race by a general plan;

Each living his own, to boot.

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's
feat;

There took my station and degree;

So grew my own small life complete,

As nature obtained her best of me —

One born to love you, sweet!

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now

Back again, as you mutely sit

Musing by fire-light, that great brow 70

And the spirit-small hand propping it,

Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,

And the gain of earth must be heaven's
gain too;

And the whole is well worth thinking o'er

When autumn comes: which I mean to do

— One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou —
Who art all truth, and who dost love me
now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks
to say —
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love
me still
A whole long life through, had but love its
will,
Would death that leads me from thee
brook delay.

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its
place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee
gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find
none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade — 'tis willed so! Might
I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious
too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves
that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all
things new.

IV.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there,
thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest
grow dark.

V.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and
clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's
abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after
this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain
the sky!

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt
sink

Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it
fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man
best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one 40
tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with
the rest.

VIII.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis
brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall —
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a
call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX.

But now, because the hour through years
was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed, 50
Because thou once hast loved me —
wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride;
"Chance cannot change my love, nor
time impair.

X.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
"I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
"Look from my path when, mimicking
the same,
"The firefly glimpses past me, come and
gone?
"— Where was it till the sunset? where
anon
"It will be at the sunrise! What's to 60
blame?"

XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's
sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the
strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze
and dream!

XII.

— Ah, but the fresher faces! "Is it true,"
Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and
new?"

"Some hair, — how can one choose but
grasp such wealth?"

"And if a man would press his lips to lips
"Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there
slips

"The dew-drop out of, must it be by
stealth?"

XIII.

"It cannot change the love still kept for
Her,

"More than if such a picture I prefer
"Passing a day with, to a room's bare
side:

"The painted form takes nothing she pos-
sessed,

10 "Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
"A man looks. Once more, what is there
to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me —
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God
see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou
canst

Away to the new faces — disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more:

20 Re-issue looks and words from the old
mint,

Pass them afresh, no matter whose the
print

Image and superscription once they
bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend, —
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine
shalt be,

Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for
thee!

XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
30 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?

Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and
such

"The smile he used to love with, then as
now!"

XVIII.

Might I die last and show thee! Should I
find

Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,

Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I
know!

XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and
more

By heart each word, too much to learn at
first;

And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That
were cause

For lingering, though thou calledst, if I
durst!

XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one
stride?

I'll say then, here's a trial and a task —
Is it to bear? — if easy, I'll not ask:

Though love fail, I can trust on in thy
pride.

XXI.

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the life
behind

The death I have to go through! — when I
find,

Now that I want thy help most, all of
thee!

What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me
fast

Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved. — And yet it will not
be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel,¹ run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's
cleft,

Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

¹ Herb with yellow flowers and seeds supposed
to be medicinal.

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
 Five beetles, — blind and green they
 grope
 Among the honey-meal: and last,
 Everywhere on the grassy slope
 I traced it. Hold it fast!

V.

The champaign with its endless fleece
 Of feathery grasses everywhere!
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,
 An everlasting wash of air —
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of
 hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 While heaven looks from its towers!

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
 Let us be unashamed of soul,
 As earth lies bare to heaven above!
 How is it under our control
 To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more.
 Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
 Where does the fault lie? What the core
 O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs, — your part my
 part
 In life, for good and ill.

X.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
 Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the
 rose
 And love it more than tongue can
 speak —
 Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute? Must I go
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
 Where is the thread now? Off again!
 The old trick! Only I discern —
 Infinite passion, and the pain
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure 50
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet
 hung to, —
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,
 Ere the true bosom she bent on,
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.¹
 Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer
 went on —
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent
 on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

I.

THAT was I, you heard last night, 60
 When there rose no moon at all,
 Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
 Tent of heaven, a planet small:
 Life was dead and so was light.

II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
 Not a glimmer from the worm;
 When the crickets stopped their cry,
 When the owls forbore a term,
 You heard music; that was I.

III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain, 70
 Sultrily inspired for proof:
 In at heaven and out again,
 Lightning! — where it broke the roof,
 Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV.

What they could my words expressed,
 O my love, my all, my one!

¹ A vestment used by ecclesiastics, and formerly by senators and persons of high rank.

Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V.

So wore night; the East was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock-
flowers:

There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you — "When life gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,

VII.

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

VIII.

Never say — as something bodes —
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the taskmaster's curse
"Than such music on the roads!

IX.

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
"Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
"Any star, the smallest one,
"While some drops, where lightning
rent,
"Show the final storm begun —

X.

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
"When the garden-voices fail
"In the darkness thick and hot, —
"Shall another voice avail,
"That shape be where these are not?

XI.

"Has some plague a longer lease,
"Proffering its help, uncouth?
"Can't one even die in peace?
"As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
"Is that face the last one sees?"

XII.

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood — the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE.

I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may
pass.

She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III.

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion — heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis
well!
Lose who may — I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

I.

JUNE was not over
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true
air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere, —
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care?"

II.

Well, dear, in-doors with you!
True! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness.
Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mend her bower now, your hand
left unsightly
By plucking the roses, — my June will do
rightly.

III.

And after, for pastime,
 If June be refulgent
 With flowers in completeness,
 All petals, no prickles,
 Delicious as trickles
 Of wine poured at mass-time, —
 And choose One indulgent
 To redness and sweetness:
 Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
 June use my June-lightning, the strong
 insect-ridder,
 And stop the fresh film-work, — why, June
 will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN.

I.

THAT fawn-skin dappled hair of hers,
 And the blue eye
 Dear and dewy,
 And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
 And enfold you,
 Ay, and hold you,
 And so keep you what they make you,
 Sweet!

III.

You like us for a glance, you know —
 For a word's sake
 Or a sword's sake,
 All's the same, whate'er the chance, you
 know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say —
 You and youth too,
 Eyes and mouth too,
 All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
 Sing and say for,
 Watch and pray for,
 Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
 Though we prayed you,
 Paid you, brayed you
 In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet!

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
 Be its beauty
 Its sole duty!
 Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there, 40
 Who shall wonder
 That I ponder
 A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As, — why must one, for the love foregone,
 Scout mere liking?
 Thunder-striking
 Earth, — the heaven, we looked above for,
 gone!

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
 Love with liking?
 Crush the fly-king 50
 In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
 If love grew there
 'Twould undo there
 All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
 Would you mend it
 And so end it?
 Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps, 60
 Just perfection —
 Whence, rejection
 Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
 Into tinder,
 And so hinder
 Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
 Your love-fancies!
 — A sick man sees 70
 Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the
 rose, —
 Plucks a mould-flower
 For his gold flower,
 Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
 Precious metals
 Ape the petals, —
 Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII.

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
 Leave it, rather.
 Must you gather?
 Smell, kiss, wear it — at last, throw away!

RESPECTABILITY.

I.

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
 Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
 "Have recognised your plighted troth,
 "Am sponsor for you: live in peace!" —
 How many precious months and years
 10 Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
 Before we found it out at last,
 The world, and what it fears?

II.

How much of priceless life were spent
 With men that every virtue decks,
 And women models of their sex,
 Society's true ornament, —
 Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
 Thro' wind and rain, and watch the
 Seine,
 And feel the Boulevart break again
 20 To warmth and light and bliss?

III.

I know! the world proscribes not love;
 Allows my finger to caress
 Your lips' contour and downiness,
 Provided it supply a glove.
 The world's good word! — the Institute!
 Guizot receives Montalembert!
 Eh? Down the court three lampions
 flare;
 Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE.

I.

ROOM after room,
 30 I hunt the house through
 We inhabit together.
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt
 find her —
 Next time, herself! — not the trouble be-
 hind her
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath
 blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of
 her feather.

II.

Yet the day wears,
 And door succeeds door;
 I try the fresh fortune —

Range the wide house from the wing to the 40
 centre.
 Still the same chance! she goes out as I
 enter.
 Spend my whole day in the quest, — who
 cares?
 But 'tis twilight, you see, — with such
 suites to explore,
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to
 importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me?
 Never —
 Beloved!
 While I am I, and you are you,
 So long as the world contains us both,
 Me the loving and you the loth, 50
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
 My life is a fault at last, I fear:
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
 Though I do my best I shall scarce
 succeed.
 But what if I fail of my purpose here?
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
 And, baffled, get up and begin again, —
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.
 While, look but once from your farthest 60
 bound
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,
 No sooner the old hope goes to ground
 Than a new one, straight to the self-
 same mark,
 I shape me —
 Ever
 Removed!

IN THREE DAYS.

I.

So, I shall see her in three days
 And just one night, but nights are short
 Then two long hours, and that is morn.
 See how I come, unchanged, unworn! 70
 Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
 How fresh the splinters keep and fine, —
 Only a touch and we combine!

II.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
 But nights at least the nights are short.
 As night shows where her one moon is,
 A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
 So life's night gives my lady birth
 And my eyes hold her! What is worth
 The rest of heaven, the rest of earth? 80

III.

O loaded curls, release your store
 Of warmth and scent, as once before

The tingling hair did, lights and darks
 Out breaking into fairy sparks,
 When under curl and curl I pried
 After the warmth and scent inside,
 Thro' lights and darks how manifold —
 The dark inspired, the light controlled!
 As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV.

What great fear, should one say, "Three
 days
 "That change the world might change as
 well
 "Your fortune; and if joy delays,
 "Be happy that no worse befell!"
 What small fear, if another says,
 "Three days and one short night beside
 "May throw no shadow on your ways;
 "But years must teem with change untried,
 "With chance not easily defied,
 "With an end somewhere undescried."
 No fear! — or if a fear be born
 This minute, it dies out in scorn.
 Fear? I shall see her in three days
 And one night, now the nights are short,
 Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.

I.

NEVER any more,
 While I live,
 Need I hope to see his face
 As before.
 Once his love grown chill,
 Mine may strive:
 Bitterly we re-embrace,
 Single still.

II.

Was it something said,
 Something done,
 Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head?
 Strange! that very way
 Love begun:
 I as little understand
 Love's decay.

III.

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
 How he looked as if I sung,
 — Sweetly too.
 If I spoke a word,
 First of all
 Up his cheek the colour sprung,
 Then he heard.

IV.

Sitting by my side,
 At my feet,
 So he breathed but air I breathed,
 Satisfied!
 I, too, at love's brim
 Touched the sweet:
 I would die if death bequeathed
 Sweet to him.

V.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
 He exclaimed:
 "Let thy love my own foretell!"
 I confessed:
 "Clasp my heart on thine
 "Now unblamed,
 "Since upon thy soul as well
 "Hangeth mine!"

VI.

Was it wrong to own,
 Being truth?
 Why should all the giving prove
 His alone?
 I had wealth and ease,
 Beauty, youth:
 Since my lover gave me love,
 I gave these.

VII.

That was all I meant,
 — To be just,
 And the passion I had raised,
 To content.
 Since he chose to change
 Gold for dust,
 If I gave him what he praised
 Was it strange?

VIII.

Would he loved me yet,
 On and on,
 While I found some way undreamed
 — Paid my debt!
 Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
 He should smile "She never seemed
 "Mine before.

IX.

"What, she felt the while,
 "Must I think?
 "Love's so different with us men!"
 He should smile:
 "Dying for my sake —
 "White and pink!
 "Can't we touch these bubbles then
 "But they break?"

X.

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES.

I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
10 And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of
maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one
cadence,
20 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
30 Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die! — In vain, the
* same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI.

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning.
40 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,

Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! But no — the old
measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders, 50
Sprung from the dust where our flesh
moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began
her,
Shaped her to his mind! — Alas! in like
manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE.

I.

LET them fight it out, friend! things have
gone too far.
God must judge the couple: leave them as
they are
— Whichever one's the guiltless, to his
glory,
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my 60
story!

II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such
a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink
as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the em-
broilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and
entailment?

III.

Who's the culprit of them? How must he
conceive
God — the queen he caps to, laughing in
his sleeve,
"Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath
her:
"Still, one must not be too much in
earnest, either!"

IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God
observes;
Then go live his life out! Life will try his 70
nerves,

When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to heaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII.

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X.

Once more — Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No? — Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can. 30
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He reck's not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold: 40
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for 50
tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
— And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
ing
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I 60
know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,
 Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend
 me low
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands
 together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently
 tether
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy gar-
 ment's spread?

IV.

*If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy heal-
 ing hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy
 breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much
 thought expands,
 io Back to its proper size again, and smooth-
 ing
 Distortion down till every nerve had
 soothing,
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be re-
 paired!
 I think how I should view the earth and
 skies
 And sea, when once again my brow was
 bared
 After thy healing, with such different
 eyes.
 O world, as God has made it! All is
 beauty:
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
 What further may be sought for or
 declared?

VI.

20 Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend!) — that little
 child to pray,
 Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently, — with his own head
 turned away
 Over the earth where so much lay before
 him
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening
 o'er him,
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content
 30 — My angel with me too: and since I
 care
 For dear Guercino's fame (to which in
 power
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent) —

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
 At all times, and has else endured some
 wrong —
 I took one thought his picture struck from
 me,
 And spread it out, translating it to song.
 My love is here. Where are you, dear old
 friend?
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far
 end?
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea. 40

MEMORABILIA.

I.

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
 And did he stop and speak to you
 And did you speak to him again?
 How strange it seems and new!

II.

But you were living before that,
 And also you are living after;
 And the memory I started at —
 My starting moves your laughter.

III.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
 And a certain use in the world no doubt, 50
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
 'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV.

For there I picked up on the heather
 And there I put inside my breast
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
 Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY.

I.

STAND still, true poet that you are!
 I know you; let me try and draw you.
 Some night you'll fail us: when afar
 You rise, remember one man saw you, 60
 Knew you, and named a star!

II.

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
 That loving hand of his which leads you
 Yet locks you safe from end to end
 Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
 Just saves your light to spend?

III.

His clenched hand shall unclothe at last,
 I know, and let out all the beauty:

My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but thou
"Forever set'st our table praising,
"Keep'st the good wine till now!"

V.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say — a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's¹ eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII.

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
— To get which, pricked a king's ambi-
tion;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'erwhispered!..
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping
fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's
womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze

¹ The Syrian Venus.

And clarify, — refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes
combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII.

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his ⁵⁰
cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats, —
Both gorge. Who fished the murex²
up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-
GOTHA.

[An imaginary composer.]

I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so oft:
What do you mean by your mountainous
fugues?³
See, we're alone in the loft, —

II.

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note, ⁶⁰
Dead though, and done with, this many a
year:
Let's have a colloquy, something to
quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III.

See, the church empties apace:
Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes'
grace!
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to
rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once, ⁷⁰

² Molluscs from which the famous Tyrian
purple dye was obtained.

³ A fugue is a short melody.

Beds the last intruder back to his bounds
— O you may challenge them, not a
response.
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

VI.

Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
— March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept
about.
Supervise all betwixt pavement and
spere,
Put rats and mice to the rout —

VII.

Alone and Justice and Just —
Order things back to their place,
to Have a sharp eye less the candlesticks
rust.
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacra-
ment lace,
Clear the dress-elver of dust.)

VIII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and cunningly,
Just now your masterpiece, hand number
twelve?
Here's what should smite, could one
handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII.

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
to Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and
surveyed.
O'er my three claviers,¹ yon forest of
pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX.

Sure you were wished to speak?
I sat, with down upon side a score,
Yes, and eyes hunted to put on each cheek.
Like two great doves,² as they wrace
them of pure,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X.

Sure you said — "Good, the mere notes;
"Still, couldn't they take my intent,
to "Know what procured me our Company's
notes —
"A master were lauded and scientists
shent,
"Parted the sheep from the goats!"

¹ Keyboard of organ.

² A note in music.

XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, try my candle's a snuff!
Burn, do you see! to its uttermost
snuff —
I believe in you, but that's not enough:
Give my conviction a clench!

XII.

First you deliver your phrase
— Nothing propounded that I see.
Fit in itself for much blame or much
praise —
Answered no less, where no answer needs
be
Off start the Two on their ways.

XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help.
In smokes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his
nose,
So the cry's open, the Kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close.

XIV.

One disseminates, he is candid;
Two more interpose, — has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man
and,
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the
wing washed;
Back to One, goes the case handled.

XV.

One says his say with a difference;
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vocifer-
ance;
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-
restraining.
Five, though, stands out all the stuffer hence.

XVI.

One is incisive, copious;
Two returns, nettled, hurt, crispitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, ex-
pensive;
Four overbears them all, strident and
strepitant;
Five . . . O Danaides,¹ O Steve!

XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a stem of the vasist Esobar's²

¹ The daughters of Danaus, condemned to pour water into a sieve.

² The Spanish castor, so severely mangled by
Fascia.

Worked on the bone of a lie. To what
issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII.

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute
their quota;
Something is gained, if one caught but
the import —
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX.

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting,¹ subjoining,
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an in-
stance I'm trying . . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding
and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim — "But where's music, the
dickens?
"Blot ye the gold, while your spider-
web strengthens
"— Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"²

XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous:
Prove me such censure unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —
Hopes 'twas for something, his organ-
pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing
his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII.

Over our heads truth and nature —
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature —
God's gold just shining its last where that
lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

¹ A quick return in fencing.
² A closely woven fabric.

XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly
closes
Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of
the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV.

Ah but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions, ⁴⁰
Down the past ages, must know more
than this age!
Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit; try again; what's the clef?
'Faith, 'tis no trifle for pipe and for
tabor —
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger, ⁵⁰
Truth's golden o'er us although we
refuse it —
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pand*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear
the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-
organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.³

XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
. . . Lo you, the wick-in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there! ⁶⁰
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-
prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-
riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

³ *Giovanni P. da Palestrina*, celebrated musi-
cian (1524-1594).

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES;

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

[The Druses still exist on Mount Lebanon, and entertain opinions said to have been first promulgated at the beginning of the eleventh century by an Egyptian caliph who styled himself Hakeem Biamrallah; that is, He who judges by the order of God. See Holland's "Stories from Browning," p. 172.]

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.

The Patriarch's Nuncio.

The Republic's Admiral.

LOYS DE DREUX, *Knight-Novice.*

Initiated Druses — DJABAL, KHALIL,

ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB,

AYOOB, and others.

Uninitiated Druses.

Prefect's Guard. Nuncio's Attendants.

Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—.

PLACE. — *An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.*

SCENE. — *A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.*

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation, —

Karshook. The moon is carried off in purple fire:

Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,

On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge — our Founder's flesh,

As he resumes our Founder's function!

Raghib.

Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved

So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea! 11

Ayooob. Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount! Thy brood

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus — but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;

Before, a presence like the morning — thine.

Absolute Djabal late, — God Hakeem now
That day breaks!

Karshook. Off, then, with disguise at last!

As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,

Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture!

Cry,

'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our Mount 20

Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,

— No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,

No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we

Who rise . . .

Ayooob.

Who shout . . .

Raghib. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha —
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*

Karshook.

Hold!

Ayooob.

— Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!

Karshook.

Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpent wise wreathed columns to the top

O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously

Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt 30

Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend

Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,

Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,

The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeous-
ness

Above the gloom they droop in — all the porch

Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
And, see, yon eight-point cross of white
flame, winking

Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble
store:

Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou
leav'st me

This single fringe!

Ayoub. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-
fox? Help!

— Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my
son was set

To twist, the night he died!

Karshook. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter
borne,

A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet
fold

These arms, be mute, lest word of mine
should mar

Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for
Rhodes —

How know I else? — Hear me denied my
right

By such a knave!

Raghib [interposing]. Each ravage for
himself!

Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there
found

Blood and a heap behind us; with us,
Djabal

Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his
minions dragged

Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's
couch!

Ayoub! Thy son; to soothe the Prefect's
pride,

Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his
brow,

Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-
work there!

Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL.

A pause and silence.

Khalil! Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve
you thus

A portion in to-day's event? What,
here —

When most behoves your feet fall soft, your
eyes

Sink low, your tongues lie still, — at
Djabal's side,

Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded
shape, —

Dispute you for these gauds?

Ayoub. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take
the fringe,

Old Karshook! I supposed it was a
day . . .

Khalil. For pillage?

Karshook. Harken, Khalil!
Never spoke

A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments

Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and 40
Anael

Challenge his prime regard: but we may
crave

(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,

His bound ourselves, him moon by moon
obeyed,

Kept silence till this daybreak — so, may
claim

Reward: who grudges me my claim?

Ayoub. To-day
Is not as yesterday!

Raghib. Stand off!

Khalil. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw

His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp 50

the fringe! Hounds! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee? — and
thee?

Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!

Khalil. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic
tribe

Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's
ridge

Its birthplace, hither! "Let the sea
divide

"These hunters from their prey," you said;
"and safe

"In this dim islet's virgin solitude
"Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier
time

"Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again, 55
"According to his word that, in the flesh

"Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
"He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
"And, reinstating all in power and bliss,

"Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
Was't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born?

Druses. 'Twas even thus, years ago.
Khalil. And did you call — (according
to old laws

Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites 70

With strangers fortune makes our lords,
and live

As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,

Druse only with the Druses) — did you call Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage

(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea The remnant of our tribe), a race self-vowed

To endless warfare with his hordes and him,

The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?

Karshook. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase out?

10 These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest Than aught we fled — their Prefect; who began

His promised mere paternal governance By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs Able to thwart the Order in its scheme Of crushing, with our nation's memory, Each chance of our return, and taming us Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever — all, he thinks

To end by this day's treason.

Khalil. Say I not?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,

20 Your Sheikhs cut off, your rites, your garb proscribed,

Must yet receive one degradation more; The Knights at last throw off the mask — transfer,

As tributary now and appanage,

This islet they are but protectors of,

To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,

Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus. You, from their Prefect, were to be con-signed

(Pursuant of I know not what vile pact) To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie

30 His predecessor in all wickedness.

When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst, Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God

Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire

Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit

Bird-like about his brow?

Druses. We saw — we heard!

Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread, The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!

Khalil. And as he said has not our Khalif done,

And so disposed events (from land to land

40 Passing invisibly) that when, this morn, The pact of villany complete, there comes This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect

There treason to consummate, — each will face

For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation:

For simulated Christians, confessed Druses: And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,

Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;

That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe, Grants us from Candia escort home at price

Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts 50 her own —

Venice, whose promised argosies should stand

Toward harbour: is it now that you, and you,

And you, selected from the rest to bear The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further

To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs, And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate — That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!

Karshook. True,

Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,

Thou art the youngest of us? — though employed

Abundantly as Djabal's confidant, 60 Transmitter of his mandates, even now.

Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces

The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like

To occupy its lowest step that day! Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspiest,

Forbidden such or such an honour, — say, Would silence serve so amply?

Khalil. Karshook thinks

I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks. Honours? I have demanded of them all

The greatest. 70

Karshook. I supposed so.

Khalil. Judge, yourselves!

Turn, thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance

now The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,

Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,

The other lands from Syria; there they meet.

Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .

Karshook. For what

Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

Khalil. That mine —

Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs — Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!

Djabal reserves that office for himself. 80

[A silence.]

Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak

— Scarce more enlightened than yourselves; since, near
 As I approach him, nearer as I trust
 Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
 Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
 Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as
 servant
 To Djabal, bearing his authority,
 Hear me appoint your several posts! Till
 noon
 None see him save myself and Anael: once
 The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
 The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
 The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
 His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from
 Rhodes! — without a sign
 That he suspects aught since he left our
 Isle;
 Nor in his train a single guard beyond
 The few he sailed with hence: so have we
 learned
 From Loys.
Karshook. Loys? Is not Loys gone
 For ever?
Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, re-
 turned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the
 leading prow
 Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
 Under the surf the foremost. Since day-
 dawn
 I kept watch to the Northward; take but
 note

Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!
Khalil. Peace!
 Thou, Karshook, with thy company,
 receive
 The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
 The wonted show of servitude: announce
 His entry here by the accustomed peal
 Of trumpets, then await the further pleas-
 ure
 Of Djabal! (Loys back, when Djabal
 sent
 To Rhodes that we might spare the single
 Knight
 Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
 First spied the Nuncio's galley from the
 South!
 Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would
 flap the mast?
 It nears apace! One galley and no more.
 If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
 Forget not, I it was!

Khalil. Thou, Ayoob, bring
 The Nuncio and his followers hither!
 Break

One rule prescribed, ye wither in your
 blood,
 Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
 — Shall banquet in the sombre groves 40
 again!

Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
 The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
 Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Khalil. Joy!
 Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all
 forth!

Tell them the long-kept secret, old and
 young!

Set free the captive, let the trampled raise
 Their faces from the dust, because at length
 The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's
 reign

Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
 Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, 50
 Druses?

Hear you this crowning witness to the
 claims

Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
 Reward and punishment, because he bade
 Who has the right; for me, what should I
 say

But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
 No majesty of all that rapt regard
 Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
 Without a check from you!

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter Loys. — *The Druses are silent.*

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal? — for I
 seek him, friends!

[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'Tis as our Isle broke 60
 out in song

For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
 To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
 But no — they cannot dream of their good
 fortune!

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have
 tidings for you

But first for Djabal: where's your tall
 bewitcher,

With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-
 mouth?

Khalil [aside to KARSHOOK]. Loys, in
 truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!

Karshook [to KHALIL]. And who takes
 charge of Loys? That's forgotten,
 Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
 And see his comrades slaughtered? 70

Loys [aside]. How they shrink
 And whisper, with those rapid faces!
 What?

The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
 Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's
 shame

On those that bring our Order ill repute!

But all's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-
sea:

The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for
Djabal —

Karshook [*aside*]. Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor; 'twere easy to dispatch
A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed
some minutes since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .
Khalil [*aside*]. Hold! What,
him dispatch?

The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who, — noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their
trade

Of lust and cruelty among us, — heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of
pride, —

Yet stood between the Prefect and our-
selves

From the beginning? Loys, Djabal
makes

Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? I take charge of him!

[*To Loys.*] Sir Loys, —

Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys
strike you dead?

Khalil [*advancing*]. Djabal has inter-
course with few or none

20 Till noontide: but, your pleasure?
Loys.

"Intercourse
"With few or none?" — (Ah, Khalil,
when you spoke

I saw not your smooth face! All health!
— and health

To Anael! How fares Anael?) — "Inter-
course

"With few or none?" Forget you, I've
been friendly

With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
— Enough of him at Rennes, I think,
beneath

The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell by
the hour,

With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy
brow,

Plausibler stories . . .

Khalil. Stories, say you? — Ah,

30 The quaint attire!
Loys. My dress for the last time!

How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me

Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest
there,

See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the
Nuncio

Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!
Khalil. The Nuncio we await? What
brings you back

From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe

Forget the world's awake while here you
drowse!

What brings me back? What should not 40
bring me, rather!

Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day —
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Khalil. What's that you wear?

Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross
your Prefect wore.

You should have seen, as I saw, the full
Chapter

Rise, to a man, while they transferred this
cross

From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . .
(fool —

My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere
eve

Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my 50
wealth

To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's
fame)

— Change this gay weed for the back
white-crossed gown,

And fight to death against the Infidel
— Not, therefore, against you, you Chris-
tians with

Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes. But Khalil,
prithee,

Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?
Khalil. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 'twere a camel-staff. Pull! That's 60
my motto,

Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.
Khalil. No curve in it? Surely a blade
should curve.

Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose
— it should poise itself!

Khalil [*wavering with irrepressible exulta-
tion the sword*]. We are a nation,
Loys, of old fame

Among the mountains! Rights have we
to keep

With the sword too!

[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget —
you bid me

Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares
you not?

(The People I will make of him and them!
Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)

Bring Djabal — say, indeed, that come he 70
must!

Khalil. At noon seek Djabal in the Pre-
fect's Chamber.

And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 'tis thy
cursed race's token,

Frank pride, no special insolence of
thine!

[*Aloud.*] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys!

[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you! I proceed to Djabal straight.

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says!

Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy, Djabal, that I report all friends were true?

[*KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.*]

Loys. *Tu Dieu!* How happy I shall make these Druses!

Was't not surpassingly contrived of me To get the long list of their wrongs by heart, Then take the first pretence for stealing off From these poor islanders, present myself Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,

And (as best proof of ardour in its cause Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)

Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,

This Prefect and his villanous career?

The princely Synod! All I dared request

Was his dismissal; and they graciously

Consigned his very office to myself —

Myself may cure the Isle diseased!

And well

For them, they did so! Since I never felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,

Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.

To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me

That I could half believe in Djabal's story,

He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes —

And me, too, since the story brought me here —

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours

Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,

Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known

An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me

The great black eyes I must forget?

Why, fool,

Recall them, then? My business is with

Djabal,

Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him? —

The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day.

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. That a strong man should think himself a God!

I — Hakeem? To have wandered through the world,

Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,

For my one chant with many a change, my tale

Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance — this

Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty, Nought less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys

To pass probation here; the getting access By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,

The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud That would disgrace the very Frank, — a few

Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,

The wave, — to ply a simple tribe with these,

Took Hakeem?

59

And I feel this first to-day!

Does the day break, is the hour imminent

When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed

Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?

Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain

"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect

"Endeavoured to extirpate — saved, a child,

"Returns from traversing the world, a man,

"Able to take revenge, lead back the march

"To Lebanon" — so shout, and who gainsays?

But now, because delusion mixed itself 60

Insensibly with this career, all's changed!

Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?

"True — but my jugglings wrought that!"

Put I heart

Into our people where no heart lurked? —

"Ah,

"What cannot an impostor do!"

Not this!

Not do this which I do! Not bid avaunt Falshood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold

on me!

Nor even get a hold on me! 'Tis now —

This day — hour — minute — 'tis as here I stand

On the accursed threshold of the Prefect, 70

That I am found deceiving and deceived!

And now what do I? — hasten to the few Deceived, ere they deceive the many —

shout,

"As I professed, I did believe myself!

"Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery —

"If Ayoob, Karshook saw — Maani there

"Must tell you how I saw my father sink;

"My mother's arms twine still about my neck;

- "I hear my brother shriek, here's yet the scar
 "Of what was meant for my own death-blow — say,
 "If you had woke like me, grown year by year
 "Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
 "Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?
 "I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
 "Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps
 "When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
 "The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
 10 "The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
 "Reserved for such a juncture, — could I call
 "My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem
 "More than performs the Djabal — you absolve?
 "— Me, you will never shame before the crowd
 "Yet happily ignorant? — Me, both throngs surround,
 "The few deceived, the many unabused,
 "— Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
 "The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif,
 "But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal — not" . . .
- Enter KHALIL hastily.*
- Khalil.* — God Hakeem!
 20 'Tis told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
 As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
 Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
 Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud;
 Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
 Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!
 Take it! my lord and theirs, be thou adored!
Djabal [aside]. Adored! — but I renounce it utterly!
Khalil. Already are they instituting choirs
 And dances to the Khalif, as of old
 30 'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.
Djabal [aside]. I abjure it!
 'Tis not mine — not for me!
Khalil. Why pour they wine
 Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
 Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
 Oh, let me tell thee — Esaad, we supposed
- Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
 The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
 The shamed Druse women never wept before:
 They can look up when we reach home, they say.
 Smell! — sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long —
 Sweet! — it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
 Alone do nothing for thee! 'Tis my office
 Just to announce what well thou know'st — but thus
 Thou bidst me. . . At this self-same moment tend
 The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
 Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
 Who were the trusty watchers! — thou forget?
 Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .
Djabal [aside]. Ay, Anael, Anael — is that said at last?
 Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
 What does abjuring mean, confessing so mean,
 To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
 On went I, solely for my people's sake:
 I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
 And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
 "Hakeem — with Anael by!"
Khalil. Ah, he is rapt!
 Dare I at such a moment break on him
 Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
 The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
 Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.
Djabal [aside]. To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
 Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
 Doubtless one such word out, and die.
 [Aloud.] You said
 That Anael . . .
Khalil. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,
 Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
 She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know.
 Something to say that will not from her mind!
 I know not what — "Let him but come!" she said.
Djabal [half-apart]. My nation — all my Druses — how fare they?
 Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
 Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

Khalil. All at the signal pant to flock around

That banner of a brow!

Djabal [aside]. And when they flock, Confess them this: and after, for reward, Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!

— Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,

Precede me there, forestall my story there, Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself.
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now? need the veriest child — why not this child?

[Turning abruptly to KHALIL.]
You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished

like Anael with our mysteries: if she Could vow, so nourished, to love only one Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds

Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,

Who thus implicitly can execute My bidding? What have I done, you could not?

Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration

Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say, This Prefect? All's in readiness?

Khalil. The sword, The sacred robe, the Khalil's mystic tiar, Laid up so long, are all disposed beside The Prefect's chamber.

Djabal. — Why did you despair?

Khalil. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,

As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours

Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged

and spoke, — "The Prefect stabbed your son — arise!

Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread

In his pavilion — then arise!" — my speech

fell idly: 'twas, "Be silent, or worse fare! Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!

Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to thrust

Into this peril — art thou Hakeem?" No!

Only a mission like thy mission renders all these obedient at a breath, subdues Their private passions, brings their wills to one.

Djabal. You think so?

Khalil. Even now — when they have witnessed

Thy miracles — had I not threatened all With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,

And couch ere this, each with his special prize,

Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope To perish. No! When these have kissed thy feet

At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present

Clear, — for the future, even Hakeem's mission

May end, and I perchance, or any youth, Shall rule them thus renewed. — I tutor thee!

Djabal. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure

As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her. Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL goes.]

Oh, not confess To these, the blinded multitude — confess, 50

Before at least the fortune of my deed Half-authorise its means! Only to her

Let me confess my fault, who in my path Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's tomb

When he would have the wayfarer descend Through the earth's rift and bear hid

treasure forth!

How should child's-carelessness prove manhood's crime

Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,

Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,

At length recover in one Druse all joy? 60

Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still

Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.

How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus? Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!

[Goes.]

Enter ANAEL, and MAANI who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.

Anael. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!

Comes Djabal, think you?

Maani. Doubtless Djabal comes.

Anael. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon.

Than in my dreams? — Nay all the tresses off

My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says That I am lovely.

Maani. Lovely: nay, that hangs 70

Awry.

Anael. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?

The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks

The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?

Maani. Content, my child.

Anael. Oh mother, tell me more of him!
He comes

Even now — tell more, fill up my soul with
him!

Maani. And did I not . . . yes, surely
. . . tell you all?

Anael. What will be changed in Djabal
when the Change

Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maani. 'Tis writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove
the dark

Superbly.

Anael. Not his eyes! His voice per-
haps?

10 Yet that's no change; for a grave current
lived

— Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver
spray

While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would
discourse to me

In that enforced still fashion, word on
word!

'Tis the old current which must swell thro'
that,

For what least tone, *Maani*, could I lose?
'Tis surely not his voice will change!

—If Hakeem

Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow,
passed

Out of the radiance as from out a robe;

20 Possessed, but was not it!

He lived with you?

Well — and that morning Djabal saw me
first

And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People — on that day . . .
proceed!

Maani. Once more, then: from the time
of his return

In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of
sons,

This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
— Who bade him ne'er forget the child he
was,

— Who dreamed so long the youth he
might become —

30 I knew not in the man that child; the man
Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
How he had gone from land to land to
save

Our tribe — allies were sure, nor foes to
dread.

And much he mused, days, nights, alone he
mused:

But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried

"Is there not one Druse left me?" — and
I showed

The way to Khali's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak —
till then,

Never did he announce — (how the moon
seemed

To ope and shut, the while, above us
both!)

— His mission was the mission promised
us;

The cycle had revolved; all things renew-
ing,

He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to
lead

His children home anon, now veiled to
work

Great purposes: the Druses now would
change!

Anael. And they have changed! And
obstacles did sink,

And furtherances rose! And round his
form

Played fire, and music beat her angel so
wings!

My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself! Did I but watch

Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I —
tho' ne'er

Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be
chosen

His own from all, the most his own of all,
To be exalted with him, side by side,

Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah,
how

Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars — how deserve

60 This honour, in their eyes? So bright are
they

Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
The girls who throng there in my dream!

One hour

And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting? —

How? —

[Suddenly to MAANI.

Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me

I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
To one theme ever? — how mere human

gifts

Suffice him in myself — whose worship
fades,

Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes

[DJABAL enters.] Oh why is it

I cannot kneel to you?

Djabal.

Rather, 'tis I

Should kneel to you, my *Anael*!

Anael.

Even so!

For never seem you — shall I speak the
truth? —

Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our

people,

Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow — my truth!

You mean that I should never kneel to you —
So, thus I kneel!

Djabal [preventing her]. No — no!

[Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.]

Ha, have you chosen . . .

Anael. The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, *Djabal*,

Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time

That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood

Beats, beats!

[Aside.] Oh must I then — since
Loys leaves us

Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already —
must

I needs confess them now to *Djabal*? —
own

That when I saw that stranger, heard his
voice,

My faith fell, and the woeful thought
flashed first

That each effect of *Djabal*'s presence,
taken

For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach

Beat fast, whose brain while he was by
swam round,

Whose soul at his departure died away,
— That every such effect might have been

wrought

In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt

Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
How shall I meet the rapture presently,

With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?
Djabal [aside]. Avow the truth? I can-

not! In what words
Avow that all she loved in me was false?

— Which yet has served that flower-like
love of hers

To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and
clasp

With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself

So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage — might

. . . these still
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own

strength

Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn!

But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'Tis not for my sake but for *Anael*'s sake

I leave her soul this *Hakeem* where it
leans.

Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!
And yet — a thought comes: here my

work is done
At every point; the Druses must return —

Have convoy to their birth-place back,
who'er

The leader be, myself or any Druse —
Venice is pledged to that: 'tis for myself,

For my own vengeance in the Prefect's
death,

I stay now, not for them: to slay or
spare

The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;

What would his death be but my own
reward?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone! 50
Let him escape with all my House's blood!

Ere he can reach land, *Djabal* disappears,
And *Hakeem*, *Anael* loved, shall, fresh as

first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime

Above the world. She cannot touch that
world

By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys, — of mankind the only one

Able to link my present with my past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,

Thence, able to unmask me, — I've dis- 60
posed

Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Khalil. Loys greets thee!

Djabal. Loys? To drag me back? It
cannot be!

Anael [aside]. Loys! Ah, doubt may
not be stifled so!

Khalil. Can I have erred that thou so
gazes? Yes,

I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned

Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As

though

On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung! 70

Djabal. — And asks for me?

Khalil. Thou knowest all things. Thee
in chief he greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys

Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

Djabal [aside]. Shame winds me with
her tether round and round.

Anael [aside]. Loys? I take the trial! it
is meet,

The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting

Which my own act may compass. Ay, this 80
way

All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Ad-

vance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my
Lord,

The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Djabal [aside]. Before, there were so few deceived! and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle

But, having learned my superhuman claims,

And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash The whole truth out from Loys at first word!

While Loys, for his part, will hold me up, With a Frank's unimaginable scorn

Of such imposture, to my people's eyes! Could I but keep him longer yet awhile

From them, amuse him here until I plan How he and I at once may leave the Isle!

Khalil I cannot part with from my side — My only help in this emergency:

'There's Anael!

Anael. Please you?

Djabal. Anael — none but she!

[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,

Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

Anael [aside]. As I divined: he bids me save myself,

Offers me a probation — I accept.

Let me see Loys!

Loys [without]. Djabal!

Anael [aside]. 'Tis his voice.

The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,

The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud

On this and that inflicted tyranny,

— Aught serving to parade an ignorance Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me

close With what I viewed at distance: let myself

Probe this delusion to the core!

Djabal. He comes.

Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits

Till I return once more — and but once

more.

ACT III.

ANAEL and LOYS.

Anael. Here leave me! Here I wait another. 'Twas

For no mad protestation of a love

Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?

Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you

Are here — I only feel you here!

Anael. No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,

Alas, say nothing of myself, who am

A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,

Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,

Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet

To say your breathing passes through me, changes

My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you, As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it —

'This is not to protest my love! You said You could love one . . .

Anael. One only! We are bent To earth — who raises up my tribe, I love;

The Prefect bows us — who removes him; we

Have ancient rights — who gives them back to us,

I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go! Him

Loys. You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!

[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but myself?

Had I apprised her that I come to do Just this, what more could she acknow-

ledge? No, She sees into my heart's core! What is it

Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?

Why turns she from me? Ah fool, overfond

To dream I could call up . . . What never dream

Yet feigned! 'Tis love. Oh Anael, speak to me!

Djabal — *Anael.* Seek Djabal by the Prefect's

chamber At noon! [*She paces the room.*

Loys [aside]. And am I not the Prefect now?

Is it my fate to be the only one Able to win her love, the only one

Unable to accept her love? The past Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here

This morn as to a slave, to set her free And take her thanks, and then spend day

by day Content beside her in the Isle? What

works This knowledge in me now? Her eye has

broken The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake

I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till

now, To live without!

— As I must live! To-day Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never

shall Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm, Thy soldier!

Anael. Djabal you demanded, comes

Loys [aside]. What wouldst thou, Loys?
See him? Nought beside

Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here,
made known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them; and shall I meet him
now,

When nought is wanting but a word of
his,

To — what? — induce me to spurn hope,
faith, pride,

Honour away, — to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's
mouths,

Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me

The very opportunities I turn
Against them! Let me not see Djabal
now!

Anael. The Prefect also comes.

Loys [aside]. Him let me see,
Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me, — to attest belief in me —
And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have de-
stroyed

This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly!
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever!

[Goes.]

Anael. Yes, I am calm now; just one
way remains —

One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side — two men! I balance
looks

And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed,
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One
way!

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal [to himself]. No moment is to
waste then; 'tis resolved.

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle — if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least, —
All's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael!

Anael. Djabal, I am thine!

Djabal. Mine? Djabal's? — As if Ha-
keem had not been?

Anael. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you
read my thought?

Why need I speak, if you can read my
thought?

Djabal. I do not, I have said a thousand
times.

Anael. (My secret's safe, I shall sur-
prise him yet!)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our
porch

You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil
away,

And one fringe fell behind your neck — I
see!)

. . . I knew you were not human, for I
said

"This dim secluded house where the sea so
beats

"Is heaven to me — my people's huts are
hell

"To them; this august form will follow me,
"Mix with the waves his voice will, — I
have him;

"And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
"Rounds to the full whether I choose or
no!

"His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
"His hand grew damp — surely he meant
to say

"He let me love him: in that moment's
bliss

"I shall forget my people pine for home —
"They pass and they repass with pallid
eyes!"

I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow —
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.

Embrace me!

Djabal [apart]. And she loved me!
Nought remained

But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect
dead?

Anael. Ah, you reproach me! True,
his death crowns all,

I know — or should know: and I would
do much,

Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have
known death,

Would never doom the Prefect, were death
fearful

As we report!

Death! — a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the
brain,

Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-
shell

Of flesh, perchance!

Death! — witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to
die

For Khalil, for Maani — what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance

My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!

Djabal [avoiding her]. I come for that
— to say

Such an occasion is at hand: 'tis like

I leave you — that we part, my Anael, —
part

For ever!

Anael. We part? Just so! I have
succumbed, —

I am, he thinks, unworthy — and nought
less

Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no
way short

Of that? Oh not that!

Death! — yet a hurt bird

Died in my hands; its eyes filmed — "Nay,
it sleeps,"

I said, "will wake to-morrow well:"
'twas dead.

Djabal. I stand here and time fleets.

Anael — I come

10 To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, breathlessly.

Khalil. He's here! The Prefect!

Twenty guards,

No more: no sign he dreams of danger.
All

Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts — wait but the deed's accom-
plishment

To join us with thy Druses to a man.

Still holds his course the Nuncio — near
and near

The fleet from Candia steering.

Djabal [aside]. . . All is lost!

— Or won?

Khalil. And I have laid the sacred robe,

20 The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch —
the place

Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Pref-
ect's trumpet.

Djabal. Then I keep Anael; — him
then, past recall,

I slay — 'tis forced on me. As I began
I must conclude — so be it!

Khalil. For the rest,

Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat

Thy post again of thee: tho' danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee

In slaying the Prefect.

Anael [aside]. And 'tis now that Djabal

30 Would leave me! — in the glory meet for
him!

Djabal. As glory, I would yield the deed
to you

Or any Druse; what peril there may be,
I keep. [Aside.] All things conspire to

hound me on.

Not now, my soul, draw back, at least!
Not now!

The course is plain, howe'er obscure all
else.

Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars — then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!

Khalil. Anael, and no part for us!

[To DJABAL.] Hast thou possessed her
with . . .

Djabal [to ANAEL]. Whom speak you
to?

What is it you behold there? Nay, this
smile

Turns stranger. Shudder you? The
man must die,

As thousands of our race have died thro'
him.

One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some æry thing:
What is there in his death?

Anael. My brother said,

Is there no part in it for us?

Djabal. For Khalil, —

The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's
entry;

Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him — here

I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once
these

Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bai
Entry or egress till I give the sign

Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign

60 That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no
pause!

Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Khalil. What sign? and who the
bearer?

Djabal. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she
stands!

Have I not . . . I must have some task
for her.

Anael, not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's
chamber!

Anael, keep you the ring — give you the
sign!

(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
Be faithful?

Anael [taking the ring]. I would fain be
worthy. Hark! [Trumpet without.]

Khalil. He comes.

Djabal. And I too come.

Anael. One word, but one!

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?
Then? On the instant?

Djabal. I exalted? What?

He, there — we, thus — our wrongs re-
 venged, our tribe
 Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure your-
 self,
 Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
 Exalted!
Khalil. He is here.
Djabal. Away — away! [*They go.*]

Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and LOYS.

The Prefect [to Guards]. Back, I say,
 to the galley every guard!
 That's my sole care now; see each bench
 retains
 Its complement of rowers; I embark
 O' the instant, since this Knight will have
 it so.
 Alas me! Could you have the heart, my
 Loys!
 10 [*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the
 holy Nuncio here forthwith!

[*The Guards go.*]
Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
 The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
 With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect
 now?

You depose me — you succeed me? Ha,
 ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom
 laughter less becomes
 Than yesterday's forced meekness we
 beheld . . .

Prefect. — When you so eloquently
 pleaded, Loys,
 For my dismissal from the post? Ah,
 meek

With cause enough, consult the Nuncio
 else!

20 And wish him the like meekness: for so
 staunch

A servant of the Church can scarce have
 bought

His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard
 pieces!

You've my successor to condole with,
 Nuncio!

I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!

Loys. You make as you would tell me
 you rejoice

To leave your scene of . . .

Prefect. Trade in the dear Druses?
 Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what
 yesterday

We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
 A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,

30 Which you'll need shortly! Did it never
 breed

Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
 When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth —
 was bent

On having a partaker in my rule?

Why did I yield this Nuncio half the
 gain,

If not that I might also shift — what on
 him?

Half of the peril, Loys!

Loys.

Peril?

Prefect.

Hark you!

I'd love you if you'd let me — this for
 reason,

You save my life at price of . . . well, say
 risk

At least, of yours. I came a long time
 since

To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me 40
 tame

These savage wizards, and reward myself —
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate
 your crime?

Prefect. Loys, the Knights! we doubt
 less understood

Each other; as for trusting to reward

From any friend beside myself . . . no,
 no!

I clutched mine on the spot, when it was
 sweet,

And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
 Alive — was sure they were not on me,
 only

When I was on them: but with age comes
 caution:

And stinging pleasures please less and 50
 sting more.

Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were
 brighter

Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael
 left,

I set my heart upon — Oh, prithee, let
 That brave new sword lie still!) — These

joys looked brighter,

But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
 With this alcove's delicious memories

Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
 Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine,

the oar,
 Stealing to catch me. Brief, when I began

To quake with fear — (I think I hear the 60
 Chapter

Solicited to let me leave, now all
 Worth staying for was gained and gone!)

— I say,

Just when, for the remainder of my life,
 All methods of escape seemed lost — that

then

Up should a young hot-headed Loys
 spring,

Talk very long and loud, — in fine, compel
 The Knights to break their whole arrange-
 ment, have me

Home for pure shame — from this safe-
 hold of mine

Where but ten thousand Druses seek my
 life,

To my wild place of banishment, San 70
 Gines

By Murcia, where my three fat manors
 lying,

Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me, — that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I'd love you.

Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
But I will back — will yet unveil you!

Prefect. Me?
To whom? — perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter

10 Shook his white head thrice — and some dozen times

My hand next morning shook, for value paid!

To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo? —
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he — I allowed for his half-share

Merely one hundred. To Sir . . .

Loys. See! you dare
Inculcate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change

20 Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!

Prefect. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,

And the young arm, we'll even say, my *Loys*,

— The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,

Their red-cross rivals of the Temple!
Well,

I thank you for my part, at all events.

30 Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll inhabit

My palace — sleep, perchance, in the alcove

Whither I go to meet our holy friend.

Good! and now disbelieve me if you can, —
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted

The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Prefect. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:

I bear a sober visage presently

40 With the disinterested Nuncio here —
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat — for the first time, no draught

Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.

When we next meet, this folly may have passed,

We'll hope. Ha, ha!

[*Goes through the arras.*]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,

I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunist of discoveries! I

Their Knight? I utterly renounce them 50
all!

Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? Yes,

The same hyæna groan-like laughter!
Quick —

To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses — Anael's tribe!

Djabal! She's mine at last. Djabal, I say!
[*Goes.*]

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. Let me but slay the Prefect.
The end now!

To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. 60

[*Seeing the robe, etc., disposed.*]

Mine should never so

Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,

Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe.
Why not

The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more

Betokens it than rule? — yet — yet —

[*Lays down the tiar.*]

[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes!

[*Taking the sword.*]

If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet

Clogged with the blood of twenty years can 70
fall

Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts!
He'll lift . . .

Which arm to push the arras wide? — or both?

Stab from the neck down to the heart —
there stay!

Near he comes — nearer — the next footstep! Now!

[*As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.*]

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?

Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,

And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?

Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEI screams. So slow to feel

'Tis not a sight for you to look upon?

A moment's work — but such work! Till you go,

I must be idle — idle, I risk all! [Pointing to her hair.

Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,

But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!

Anael. With mine!

Djabal. Blood — Anael?

Anael. Djabal, 'tis thy deed!

It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine —

Be worthy thee — but I must needs confess

'Twas not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!

Speak to me!

Djabal. Oh, my punishment!

Anael. Speak to me While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee, And the approaching exaltation, — "make

"One sacrifice!" I said, — and he sat there,

Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain. 'Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst —

perchance It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed.

Djabal. It is my deed.

Anael. His blood all this! — this! and . . .

And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not — now

Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!

It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us! At least confirm me! Djabal, blood

gushed forth — He was our tyrant — but I looked he'd fall

Prone as asleep — why else is death called sleep?

Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis sin, I know, —

Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him? Be it thou that punishest, not he — who

creeps On his red breast — is here! 'Tis the small groan

Of a child — no worse! Bestow the new life, then!

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing! [Following him as he retreats.

Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!

Djabal [sinks on his knees]. Thus! Behold my change! You have done nobly.

I! —

Anael. Can Hakeem kneel?

Djabal. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!

I have dealt falsely, and this woe is come. No — hear me ere scorn blast me! Once 40

and ever, The deed is mine. Oh think upon the past!

Anael [to herself]. Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?

Djabal. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep: Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, "Without

"A miracle this cannot be" — I said "Be there a miracle!" — for I saw you.

Anael. His head lies south the portal. Djabal. — Weighed with this

The general good, how could I choose my own?

What matter was my purity of soul? Little by little I engaged myself — 50

Heaven would accept me for its instrument,

I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me. Anael. Is it this blood breeds dreams in

me? Who said You were not Hakeem? And your

miracles — The fire that plays innocuous round your

form? [Again changing her whole manner.

Ah, thou wouldst try me — thou art Hakeem still!

Djabal. Woe — woe! As if the Druses of the Mount

(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,

Beneath their former selves) should comprehend

The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets

That would not easily affect the meanest Of the crowd there, could wholly subju-

gate The best of our poor tribe. Again that eye?

Anael [after a pause springs to his neck.] Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!

Why, Djabal, were you human only, — think,

Maani is but human, Khalil human, Loys is human even — did their words

Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you

So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me

So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect

And the blood, there — could I see only you?

— Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?

Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms and puts her silently from him.]

Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal. Crouch!

Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!

The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud — Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,

Based on the living rock, devoured not by The unstable desert's jaws of sand, — falls prone.

10 Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there

A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through.

— Let us come, Djabal!

Djabal. Whither come?

Anael. At once —

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!

Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!

So, feel less pain! Let them deride, — thy tribe

Now trusting in thee, — Loys shall deride! Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Djabal. Where come?

Anael. Where? — to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,

Now that the end is gained — (I love thee now —)

20 That thou hast so deceived them — (perchance love thee

Better than ever.) Come, receive their doom

Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee! Shame with the man, no triumph with the

God,
Be mine! Come!

Djabal. Never! More shame yet? and why?

Why? You have called this deed mine — it is mine!

And with it I accept its circumstance.

How can I longer strive with fate? The past

Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.

Hear me! The argosies touch land by this;

30 They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.

What if we reign together? — if we keep Our secret for the Druses' good? — by means

Of even their superstition, plant in them New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek

Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.

We two will be divine to them — we are! All great works in this world spring from the ruins

Of greater projects — ever, on our earth, Babels men block out, Babylons they build.

I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim

The deed! Retire! You have my ring — you bar

All access to the Nuncio till the forces From Venice land.

Anael. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

Djabal [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head*]. And from this moment that I dare ope wide

Eyes that till now refused to see, begins My true dominion: for I know myself,

And what am I to personate. No word? [*ANAEL goes.*]

'Tis come on me at last! His blood on her —

What memories will follow that! Her eye,

Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black 50 brow!

Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed

The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume

To work in this foul earth by means not foul?

Scheme, as for heaven, — but, on the earth, be glad

If a least ray like heaven's be left thee! Thus

I shall be calm — in readiness — no way Surprised. [*A noise without.*]

This should be Khalil and my Druses. Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee,

sword!

Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you! In! Behold

Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal! — but no time for words.

You know who waits there?

[Pointing to the alcove.]

Well! — and that 'tis there

He meets the Nuncio? Well? Now, a surprise —

He there —

Djabal. I know —

Loys. — is now no mortal's lord, Is absolutely powerless — call him, dead —

He is no longer Prefect — you are Prefect! Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,

Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!

I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I
felt
What you were loath to speak — your need
of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me: have, face to face, con-
fronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on
him
The enormities of his long rule; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you
urged
Of old to me: I spoke, too, of your good-
ness,
Your patience — brief, I hold henceforth
the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord, — but you,
You are associated in my rule —
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had
they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour.
You gaze at me? Hear greater wonders
yet —
I cast down all the fabric I have built.
These Knights, I was prepared to worship
... but
Of that another time; what's now to say,
Is — I shall never be a Knight! Oh,
Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like
you:
My wealth, my friends, my power, are
wholly yours,
Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love —
She loves me — Khalil's sister —
Djabal. Anael?
Loys. Start you?
Seems what I say, unknighly? Thus it
chanced:
When first I came, a novice, to the Isle ...

*Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from
the alcove.*

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here
is Loys!
And here — [Others enter from the alcove.
[Pointing to DJABAL.] Secure him, bind
him — this is he!
[They surround DJABAL.]
Loys. Madmen — what is't you do?
Stand from my friend,
And tell me!
Guard. Thou canst have no part in
this —
Surely no part! But slay him not! The
Nuncio

Commanded, slay him not!
Loys. Speak, or ...
Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost em-
brace.
Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools!
How Djabal?
[A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe;
DJABAL flings down the khandjar.
Loys [after a pause]. Thou hast re- 4c
ceived some insult worse than all,
Some outrage not to be endured —
[To the Guards.] Stand back!
He is my friend — more than my friend.
Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation.
Guard. No!
No provocation! 'Tis a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif — 'tis on that pre-
tence —
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now comes back to life and light again!
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates — who, struck 50
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this
Djabal
Here where we take him.
Djabal [aside]. Who broke faith with
me?
Loys [to DJABAL]. Hear'st thou? Speak!
Till thou speak, I keep off these,
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an incensive tribe,
With ... but thou know'st — on that
tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art
thou?
Djabal. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. 60
All's true.
No more concealment! As these tell thee,
all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are
enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part.
Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have
served me more;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou
hearest,
We are a separated tribe: farewell!
Loys. Oh where will truth be found
now? Canst thou so
Belie the Druses? Do they share thy
crime?
Those thou professest of our Breton stock, 70
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but
now
Khalil, my friend: he spoke with me —
no word
Of this! and Anael — whom I love, and
who

Loves me — she spoke no word of this.

Djabal. Poor boy!
Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?

We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?

No: older than the eldest, princelier
Than Europe's princeliest race, our tribe:
enough

For thine, that on our simple faith we found

A monarchy to shame your monarchies

At their own trick and secret of success.

The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon

10 The palace-step of him whose life ere night
is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait
forsooth

The kind interposition of a boy

— Can only save ourselves if thou concede:

— Khalil admire thee? He is my right-hand,

My delegate! — Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!

Loys. Thy bride? She one of them!

Djabal. My bride!

Loys. And she retains her
glorious eyes!

She, with those eyes, has shared this mis-
creant's guilt!

20 Ah — who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber?
Khalil

Bade me seek Djabal there, too. All is
truth.

What spoke the Prefect worse of them than
this?

Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?

And I — have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'Tis well.

Djabal. Loys, I wronged thee — but
unwittingly:

I never thought there was in thee a virtue

30 That could attach itself to what thou
deemest

A race below thine own. I wronged thee,
Loys,

But that is over: all is over now,

Save the protection I ensure against

My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and mayst depart: so,
come!

Loys. Thy side? I take protection at
thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys!

'Tis too true:

And only by his side thou mayst escape.
The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock

10 About the palace — will be here — on
thee —

And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even
we

Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio.

Fly!

The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are

nought

In thy tribe's persecution! [*To Loys.*]

Keep by him!

They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince
returned:

He is their God, they shout, and at his beck 35
Are life and death!

*Loys [springing at the khandjar DJABAL
had thrown down, seizes him by the
throat].* Thus by his side am I!

Thus I resume my knighthood and its
warfare,

Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of
place!

Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes
may cluster:

Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee, — thou
art Hakeem,

How say they? — God art thou! but also
here

Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church
calls

Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou

Art crushed. Hordes of thy Druses flock 60
without:

Here thou hast me, who represent the
Cross,

Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound
and thee.

Die! [*DJABAL remains calm.*] Implore my
mercy, Hakeem, that my scorn

May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy
trade;

I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were —
my friend

Had such. Speak! Beg for mercy at my
foot! [*DJABAL still silent.*]

Heaven could not ask so much of me —
not, sure,

So much. I cannot kill him so.

[*After a pause.*] Thou art

Strong in thy cause, then — dost outbrave 70
us, then.

Heardst thou that one of thine accom-
plishes,

Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
His charge! Thou hast not even slain the

Prefect

As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet
that Druse!

Come with me and disprove him — be thou
tried

By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,

Or I will do God's office. What, shalt thou

Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner? Consent,
Or I will strike — look in my face — I will!

Djabal. Give me again my khandjar, if
thou darest! [*Loys gives it.*]

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me? Let us
go!

[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me?
[*Shouts without.*]

Hearst thou? I hear

No plainer than long years ago I heard

10 That shout — but in no dream now.
They return!

Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well.

ACT V.

*The Uninitiated Druses, filling the hall
tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons.
Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect
is dead, and we return to Lebanon!
My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I
doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old
Nasif — link thine arm in mine — we
fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great
fight-word? — "Lebanon?" (My daughter
20 — my daughter!) — But is Khalif to have
the office of Hamza? — Nay, rather, if he
be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves.
Where is Hakeem? — The only prophet I
ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my
youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in
black too, with a great stripe of yellow
cloth flapping down behind him like the
back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he?
Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO, with Guards.

30 *Nuncio* [*to his Attendants*]. Hold both,
the sorcerer and this accomplice
Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight in-
deed!

Lo, this black disemboгуing of the Isle!
[*To the Druses.*] Ah children, what a sight
for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage
through

To smile their very last on you! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep
Into my fold, as though a father came . . .

35 As though, in coming, a father should . . .
[*To his Guards.*] (Ten, twelve
— Twelve guards of you, and not an out-
let? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep
close!)

[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's
house, I say,

So did I come — no guard with me — to
find . . .

Alas! alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio. Even so
I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain.

While most he plotted for your good, that
father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew) — lies 50
slain.

[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the gloz-
ing knave — with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries!

Are these the Christians? These the
docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What
say ye does this wizard style himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third
Fatemite?

What is this jargon? He — the insincere
Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago, come
back

In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?

He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man 60
Is our dead Prefect's friend. Tear him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not.

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The Patriarch's power behind me, God's
above.

Those years have witnessed sin enough;
ere now

Misguided men arose against their lords,
And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved

By sorceries, cheats — alas! the same
tricks, tried

On my poor children in this nook o' the
earth,

Could triumph, that have beer successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn all nations 70

through:

"*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*

"*Cretes and Arabians*" — you are duped
the last.

Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patri-
arch

That so much love was wasted — every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,

Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by

that . . .

That . . . never will I speak his hated
name!

[To his Servants.] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter

Called their arch-wizard by? [They whisper.] Oh, Djabal was't?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge — How by his spells the demons were allured To seize you: not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,

10 By measures such as these, he would have led you

Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?

Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses. Hark ye!

Nuncio. — Be of one privilege amerced?

No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!

No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid

Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Kar-shook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the initiated DRUSES.

Khalil. Venice and her deliverance are at hand:

Their fleet stands through the harbour.

Hath he slain

The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

Nuncio [to Attendants]. What's this of Venice? Who's this boy?

[Attendants whisper.] One Khalil?

30 Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,

The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear? [To the Druses.] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:

Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?

Doth he abet him in his sorceries?

Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!

[They spring at KHALIL; as he beats them back.

Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded youth!

Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him) — whom, my child?

Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.

I am an old man as thou seest — have done

With life; and what should move me but the truth?

Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?

'Tis I interpret for thy tribe.

Khalil.

Oh, this

Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear —

Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake

The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,

The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?

They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio [aside]. If it be true! Venice?

Oh, never true!

Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,

So fain get footing here, stand close by 50 Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Khalil.

Ere he appear

And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio [aside]. Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,

The trunk were easily stilled. [To the Druses.] He? Bring him forth!

Since so you needs will have it, I assent. You'd judge him, say you, on the spot —

confound

The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's

Our short black-bearded sallow friend who swore

He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one 60 stab?

Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses.

Ay, bring him forth!

The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,

And we're the Patriarch's children — true men, we!

Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Khalil. You dare not so insult him!

What, not see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed, Untrusted: they know nothing of our

Khalil!)

— Not see that if he lets a doubt arise 'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of

seeming

To have some influence in your own Re- 70 turn!

That all may say ye would have trusted him

Without the all-convincing glory — ay, And did! Embrace the occasion, friends!

For, think —

What wonder when his change takes place? But now

For your sakes, he should not reveal himself.

No: could I ask and have, I would not ask The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
 I had said, pardon them for me — for
 Anael —
 For our sakes pardon these besotted men —
 Ay, for thine own — they hurt not thee!
 Yet now
 One thought swells in me and keeps down
 all else.
 This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has
 called
 Imposture thy whole course, all bitter
 things
 Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
 Hakeem — nay, I must call thee Hakeem
 now —
 10 Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael?
 See!
Loys [to DJABAL]. Here are thy people.
 Keep thy word to me!
Djabal. Who of my people hath accused
 me?
Nuncio. So!
 So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
 A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
 May it be augury of thy after-life!
 Ever prove truncheon of the Church as
 now
 That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having
 charge
 Of the Isle here, I claim thee [turning to
 DJABAL] as these bid me,
 Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
 20 Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
 Why should I hold thee from their hands?
 (Spells, children?)
 But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)
 Thou art a prophet? — wouldst entice thy
 tribe
 From me? — thou workest miracles?
 (Attend!)
 Let him but move me with his spells!) I,
 Nuncio . . .
Djabal. . . . Which how thou camest to
 be, I say not now,
 Though I have also been at Stamboul,
 Luke!
 Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What
 need of spells?
 If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
 30 To ratify thy compact with her foe,
 The Hospitallers, for this Isle — withdraw
 Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
 My people in their freedom, tricked away
 By him I slew, — refuse to convoy us
 To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave —
 Then will be time to try what spells can do!
 Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?
Nuncio. Lo ye!
 He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
 No! The renowned Republic was and is
 40 The Patriarch's friend: 'tis not for court-
 ing Venice

That I — that these implore thy blood of
 me.
 Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so
 subtle?
 Ye, Druses, hear him. Will ye be de-
 ceived?
 How he evades me! Where's the miracle
 He works? I bid him to the proof — fish
 up
 Your galley-full of bezants that he sank!
 That were a miracle! One miracle!
 Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years.
 I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
 To save you from the good Republic's rage 50
 When she shall find her fleet was sum-
 moned here
 To aid the mummeries of a knave like this.
 [As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper.]
 Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the
 while
 One who, his close confederate till now,
 Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
 And every miracle a cheat. Who throws
 me
 His head? I make three offers, once I
 offer, —
 And twice . . .
Djabal. Let who moves perish at
 my foot!
Khalil. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh,
 Anael, Maani,
 Why tarry they? 60
Druses [to each other]. He can! He can!
 Live fire —
 [To the NUNCIO.] I say he can, old man!
 Thou know'st him not.
 Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
 Plays fawning round him. See! The
 change begins.
 All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm.
 Look not at me! It was not I!
Djabal. What Druse
 Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
 Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys,
 none
 Of my own people, as thou said'st, have
 raised
 A voice against me. 70
Nuncio [aside]. Venice to come! Death!
Djabal [continuing]. Confess and go un-
 scathed, however false!
 Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would
 submit
 To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
 How said I, Loys?
Nuncio [to his Attendants who whisper].
 Ah, ye counsel so?
 [Aloud.] Bring in the witness, then, who,
 first of all,
 Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee,
 wizard!
 Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you
 tear him

Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
 Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
 But who hath voluntarily proposed
 To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
 Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled Druse.*]

Loys. Now, Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee!

Make a ring, sons. Speak!

Expose this Djabal — what he was, and
 how:

The wiles he used, the aims he cherished:
 all,

Explicitly as late 'twas spoken to these

10 My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready,

Djabal?

Djabal. Speak,

Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, foe! farther!

Suddenly

You shall see some huge serpent glide from
 under

The empty vest, or down will thunder
 crash!

Back, Khalil!

Khalil. I go back? Thus go I back!

15 [To ANAEL.] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt
 face the Khalif! Thus!

[*He tears away ANAEL'S veil; DJABAL
 folds his arms and bows his head;
 the Druses fall back; LOYS springs
 from the side of DJABAL and the
 NUNCIO.*]

Loys. Then she was true — she only of
 them all!

True to her eyes — may keep those
 glorious eyes,

And now be mine, once again mine! Oh,
 Anael!

20 Dared I think thee a partner in his crime —

That blood could soil that hand? nay, 'tis
 mine — Anael,

— Not mine? — who offer thee before all
 these

My heart, my sword, my name — so thou
 wilt say

That Djabal, who affirms thou art his
 bride,

Lies — say but that he lies!

Djabal. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for
 me — the last!

Thou hast had every other; thou hast
 spoken

Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee
 let me

Speak first now; I will speak now!

Nuncio. Loys, pause!

30 Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's
 choicest stock,

Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first
 sword:

This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this
 trample

To earth?

Loys [to ANAEL]. Who had foreseen that
 one day Loys

Would stake these gifts against some other
 good

In the whole world? I give them thee! I
 would

My strong will might bestow real shape on
 them,

That I might see, with my own eyes, thy
 foot

Tread on their very neck! 'Tis not by
 gifts

I put aside this Djabal: we will stand —
 We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, 40

stand forth!

Who's worth her, I or thou? I — who for
 Anael

Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
 True way — left thee each by-path, boldly

lived

Without the lies and blood, — or thou, or
 thou?

Mel love me, Anael! Leave the blood
 and him!

[To DJABAL.] Now speak — now, quick
 on this that I have said, —

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a
 man!

Djabal [to ANAEL]. And was it thou be-
 trayedst me? 'Tis well!

I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
 Nor 'tis much evil thou inflict: life 50

Ends here. The cedars shall not wave
 for us:

For there was crime, and must be punish-
 ment.

See fate! By thee I was seduced, by thee
 I perish: yet do I — can I repent?

I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
 By my Frank policy, and with, in turn,

My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab
 heart —

While these remained in equipoise, I lived
 Nothing; had either been predom-
 inant,

As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic, 60

I had been something; — now, each has
 destroyed

The other — and behold, from out their
 crash,

A third and better nature rises up —
 My mere man's-nature! And I yield to it:

I love thee, I who did not love before!
Anael. Djabal!

Djabal. It seemed love, but it was
 not love:

How could I love while thou adoredst me?
 Now thou despisest, art above me so

Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doonest
 My death now; this my steel shall execute 70

Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it.

Oh luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!

Anael. My Djabal!

Djabal. Dost hesitate? I force thee
then. Approach,

Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
No further evil waits me. Speak the
doom!

Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear,
Loys!

Anael. HAKEEM! [*She falls dead.
[The Druses scream, grovelling
before him.*

Druses. Ah, Hakeem! — not on
me thy wrath!

Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!

Ha, dog, how sayest thou?

[*They surround and seize the NUNCIO
and his Guards. LOYS flings
himself upon the body of ANAEL,
on which DJABAL continues to
gaze as stupefied.*

Nuncio. Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?

Whips, racks should teach you! What,
his fools? his dupes?

Leave me! Unhand me!

Khalil [*approaching DJABAL timidly*].

Save her for my sake!

She was already thine; she would have
shared

To-day thine exaltation: think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!
Yes, feel the soft bright hair — feel!

Nuncio [*struggling with those who have
seized him*]. What, because

His leman dies for him? You think it hard
To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes,
and choice

Of deaths should suit you!

Khalil [*bending over ANAEL'S body*].

Just restore her life!

So little does it! there — the eyelids
tremble!

'Twas not my breath that made them: and
the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore her
life!

Hakeem, we have forgotten — have pre-
sumed

On our free converse: we are better taught.
See, I kiss — how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her! She kisses it — Oh, take her deed
In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?

— See,

She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the
teeth

Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in
thee!

Go not without her to the cedars, lord!

Or leave us both — I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Diabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?

Ere the Venetian trumpet sound — ere
thou

Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will
arrive

And find me in their toils — dead, very
like,

Under their feet!

What way — not one way yet

To foil them? None?

[*Observing DJABAL'S face.*

What ails the Khalif? Ah,

That ghastly face! A way to foil them
yet!

[*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif,
Druses! Is that face

God Hakeem's? Where is triumph, —
where is . . . what

Said he of exaltation — hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thy-
self!

Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy
soul

In splendour! Now, bear witness! here
I stand —

I challenge him exalt himself, and I

Become, for that, a Druse like all of
you!

The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thy- 50
self, O Hakeem!

Djabal [*advances*]. I can confess now all
from first to last.

There is no longer shame for me. I
am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds:
the Druses shout, DJABAL'S eye
catches the expression of those
about him, and, as the old dream
comes back, he is again confident
and inspired.*

Am I not Hakeem? And ye would
have crawled

But yesterday within these impure courts
Where now ye stand erect! Not grand
enough?

— What more could be conceded to such
beasts

As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
Than a mere man? A man among such
beasts

Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
Him you forsake, him fain would you 60
destroy —

With the Venetians at your gate, the Nun-
cio

Thus — (see the baffled hypocrite!) and,
best,

The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies — and twice he lies —
and thrice he lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Djabal. Druses! we shall henceforth be
far away —

Out of mere mortal ken — above the
cedars —

But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes, — through
thee,

My Khalil! Thou art full of me: I fill
Thee full — my hands thus fill thee!

Yestereve,
— Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee igno-
rant

Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
My people home whate'er betide!

[Turning to the Druses.] Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon —
Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thy-
self!

Djabal [raises Loys]. Then to thee,
Loys! How I wronged thee, Loys!
Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full
revenge,

Fit for thy noble self, revenge — and thus.
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the
princely soul,

The first sword of Christ's sepulchre —
thou shalt

20 Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less, God's justice and no more,
For those I leave! To seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant
life:

And, this obtained them, leave their
Lebanon,

My Druses' blessing in thine ears — (they
shall

Bless thee with blessing sure to have its
way)

— One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart, —
perchance,

One thought of him who thus, to bid thee
speed,

His last word to the living speaks! This 30
done,

Resume thy course, and, first amidst the
first

In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly —

What shall withstand thee then?

[He bends over ANAEL.] And last to
thee!

Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream: hast thou
not

Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?

Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[He stabs himself. As he falls, sup-
ported by KHALIL and LOYS, the
Venetians enter; the ADMIRAL
advances.

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! 40
Plant the Lion!

[At the clash of the planted standard,
the Druses shout and move tumultu-
ously forward, LOYS drawing
his sword.

*Djabal [leading them a few steps between
KHALIL and LOYS].* On to the Moun-
tain! At the Mountain, Druses! [Dies.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON;

A TRAGEDY.

1843.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.
HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, and other retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *The interior of a lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion. GERARD, the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Retainer. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!
— What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Gerard. Save your courtesies, my friend. Here is my place.

2nd Retainer. Now, Gerard, out with it! What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich
bountiful

Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they
match

With our Lord Tresham through the
country-side,

Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?

Gerard. What then?
2nd Retainer. What then? Why, you,
she speaks to, if she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart

The boughs to let her through her forest
walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl
Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands 20
too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we
squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side — "there's the Earl,"
say I —

"What then?" say you!
3rd Retainer. I'll wager he has let

Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred
swim

Over the falls and gain the river!
Gerard. Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?

4th Retainer. Let Gerard be!
He's coarse-grained, like his carved black 30
cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,
look!

Well done, now — is not this beginning,
now,

To purpose?
1st Retainer. Our retainers look as fine —

That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds
himself

With his white staff! Will not a knave
behind

Prick him upright?
4th Retainer. He's only bowing, fool!

The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.
1st Retainer. That's comfort. Here's a
very cavalcade!

3rd Retainer. I don't see wherefore
Richard, and his troop

Of silk and silver varlets there, should find 40
Their perfumed selves so indispensable

On high days, holidays! Would it so dis-
grace

Our family, if I, for instance, stood —
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,

A leash of greyhounds in my left? —
Gerard. — With Hugh

The logman for supporter, in his right

The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

3rd Retainer. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!

1st Retainer. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match

The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six —

They paw the ground — Ah Walter! and that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Retainer. Ay — ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear, At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?

D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst

10 So cunningly? — then, Philip, mark this further;

No leg has he to stand on!

1st Retainer. No? That's comfort.

2nd Retainer. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,

I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,

Has got a starrier eye.

3rd Retainer. His eyes are blue:

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Retainer. So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

5th Retainer. Here's Lord Tresham's self!

There now — there's what a nobleman should be!

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like 20 A House's head.

2nd Retainer. But you'd not have a boy — And what's the Earl beside? — possess too soon

That stateliness?

1st Retainer. Our master takes his hand —

Richard and his white staff are on the move —

Back fall our people — (tsh! — there's Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties, And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)

— At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;

And the whole beautiful bright company Close round them — in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*]

Good health, long life,

30 Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Retainer. My father drove his father first to court,

After his marriage-day — ay, did he!

2nd Retainer. God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Gerard. Drink, my boys!

Don't mind me — all's not right about me — drink!

2nd Retainer [*aside*]. He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!

[*To GERARD.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

Gerard. That way?

2nd Retainer. Just so.

Gerard. Then my way's here.

[*Does.*]

2nd Retainer. Old Gerard

Will die soon — mind, I said it! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing 40

That touched the House's honour, not an eye

But his could see wherein: and on a cause Of scarce a quarter this importance,

Gerard

Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away In cares that this was right, nor that was

wrong,

Such point decorous, and such square by rule —

He knew such niceties, no herald more: And now — you see his humour: die he

will!

2nd Retainer. God help him! Who's for the great servants'-hall

To hear what's going on inside? They'd 50 follow

Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Retainer. I! —

4th Retainer. I! —

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door, Some hint of how the parley goes inside!

Prosperity to the great House once more! Here's the last drop!

1st Retainer. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II. — *A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

Tresham. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,

To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name

— Noble among the noblest in itself, Yet taking in your person, fame avers,

New price and lustre, — (as that gem you 60 wear,

Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,

Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,

Seems to re-kindle at the core) — your name

Would win you welcome! —

Mertoun. Thanks!

Tresham. — But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now — add these, and you
must grant

One favour more, nor that the least, — to
think

The welcome I should give; — 'tis given!

My lord,

My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen — betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

Mertoun. I thank you — less
For the expressed commendings which
your seal,

And only that, authenticates — forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I
take

Your praise . . . but praise less claims
my gratitude,

Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with
one

Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to
ask,

In weighed and measured unimpassioned
words,

A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord

Tresham,

I love your sister — as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her!
Wealth,

Rank, all the world thinks me, they're
yours, you know,

To hold or part with, at your choice — but
grant

My true self, me without a rood of land
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death
or life?

Guendolen [apart to AUSTIN]. Why, this
is loving, Austin!

Austin. He's so young!

Guendolen Young? Old enough, I
think, to half surmise

He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Austin. Hush!

He reddens.
Guendolen. Mark him, Austin; that's
true love!

Ours must begin again.

Tresham. We'll sit, my lord.

Ever with best desert goes diffidence.

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived
That I am wholly satisfied with you

On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search
out faults,

Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to
give

Or to refuse.

Mertoun. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?

Tresham. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.

Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

Mertoun. I . . . I . . . our two de-
mesnes, remember, touch;

I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused

Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken ^{wing} 50

Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours, —
or else

Some eyass¹ ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,

I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,

And — and then . . . I have seen her.

Guendolen [aside to AUSTIN]. Note that
mode

Of faltering out that, when a lady passed.
He, having eyes, did see her! You had
said

"On such a day I scanned her, head to
foot;

"Observed a red, where red should not 60
have been,

"Outside her elbow; but was pleased
enough

"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent
talk

Be lessoned for the future!

Tresham. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known

A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems —

You cannot know the good and tender
heart,

Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet

kind,

How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet 70
free

As light where friends are — how imbued
with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest,
yet

The . . . one might know I talked of
Mildred — thus

We brothers talk!

Mertoun. I thank you.

Tresham. In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish

To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself

creates

The want she means to satisfy. My heart

¹ Young hawk.

Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?

Mertoun. No more — thanks, thanks
— no more!

Tresham. This matter then discussed . . .

Mertoun. — We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the
roof

Which holds her: while I thought of that,
my speech

'To you would wander — as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.

I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

Tresham. With less regret 'tis suffered,
that again

10 We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mertoun. We? again? —

Ah yes, forgive me — when shall . . . you
will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint
a day

For me to wait on you — and her.

Tresham. So soon

As I am made acquainted with her
thoughts

On your proposal — howsoe'er they lean —
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mertoun. You cannot bind me more to you,
my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew

20 A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresham. So may it prove!

Mertoun. You, lady, you,
sir, take

My humble salutation!

Guendolen and Austin. Thanks!

Tresham. Within there!

[*Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts*

*MERTOUN to the door. Mean-
time AUSTIN remarks,*

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was
safe

Because my lady's brother stood my
friend!

Why, he makes sure of her — "do you say
yes —

"She'll not say, no," — what comes it to
beside?

I should have prayed the brother, "speak
this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her —
put in this —

30 "Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other
thing, —

"Then set down what she says, and how
she looks,

"And if she smiles, and" (in an under
breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you

"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guendolen. That way you'd take, friend
Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to
waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fool.

Austin. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresham [returning]. Now, voices, 4
voices! 'St! the lady's first!

How seems he? — seems he not . . .
come, faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How

seems the Earl?

A name! a blazon! if you knew their
worth,

As you will never! come — the Earl?

Guendolen. He's young.

Tresham. What's she? an infant save
in heart and brain.

Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark!
And you . . .

Austin, how old is she?

Guendolen. There's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresham. Well? 50

Guendolen. — With lacking wit.

Tresham. He lacked wit? Where
might he lack wit, so please you?

Guendolen. In standing straighter than
the steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side

And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet
lady,

"Your cousin there will do me detriment

"He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
"In my old name and fame — be sure he'll
leave

"My Mildred, when his best account of me
"Is ended, in full confidence I wear

"My grandsire's periwig down either
cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-
safes" . . .

Tresham. . . . "To give a best of best
accounts, yourself,

"Of me and my demerits." You are
right!

He should have said what now I say for
him.

Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much,

but you

— You are . . . what Austin only knows!
Come up,

All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. 70

Precede!

Guendolen. Austin, how we must —!

Tresham. Must what? Must speak
truth,

50

60

70

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!

I challenge you!

Guendolen. Witchcraft's a fault in him, For you're bewitched.

Tresham. What's urgent we obtain Is, that she soon receive him — say, to-morrow —

Next day at furthest.

Guendolen. Ne'er instruct me!

Tresham. Come! — He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm With his perfections! You're for the composed

Manly assured becoming confidence!

— Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .

I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III. — MILDRED'S chamber. A painted window overlooks the park. MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guendolen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left

Our talkers in the library, and climbed The wearisome ascent to this your bower In company with you, — I have not dared . . .

Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood, Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell — Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most

Firm-rooted heresy — your suitor's eyes, He would maintain, were grey instead of blue —

I think I brought him to contrition! — Well,

I have not done such things, (all to deserve A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,) To be dismissed so coolly.

Mildred. *Guendolen!* What have I done? what could suggest . . .

Guendolen. There, there!

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone To throw those testimonies in a heap,

Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities, With that poor silly heartless *Guendolen's*

Ill-time misplaced attempted smartnesses — And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!

Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?

Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table

The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,

Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take —

The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes! 40

Mildred. My brother — Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

Guendolen. If I said only "well" I said not much.

Oh, stay — which brother?

Mildred. Thorold! who — who else?

Guendolen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half, —

Nay, hear me out — with us he's even gentler

Than we are with our birds. Of this great House

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance

Would die for him, real dying — no mere talk:

And in the world, the court, if men would cite

The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's 50 name

Rises of its clear nature to their lips.

But he should take men's homage, trust in it,

And care no more about what drew it down.

He has desert, and that, acknowledgment; Is he content?

Mildred. You wrong him, *Guendolen.*

Guendolen. He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er

The light of his interminable line,

An ancestry with men all paladins,

And women all . . .

Mildred. Dear *Guendolen*, 'tis late!

When yonder purple pane the climbing 60 moon

Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guendolen. Well, that Thorold Should rise up from such musings, and receive

One come audaciously to graft himself Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,

No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mildred. Who finds A spot in Mertoun?

Guendolen. Not your brother; therefore,

Not the whole world.

Mildred. I am weary, *Guendolen.* Bear with me!

Guendolen. I am foolish.

Mildred. Oh no, kind! But I would rest.

Guendolen. Good night and rest to you!

I said how gracefully his mantle lay 70 Beneath the rings of his light hair?

Mildred. Brown hair.

Guendolen. Brown? why, it is brown: how could you know that?

Mildred. How? did not you — Oh, Austin 'twas, declared

His hair was light, not brown — my head! — and look,

The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,

Good night!

Guendolen. Forgive me — sleep the soundlier for me!

[Going, she turns suddenly.

Mildred!

Perdition! a! — discovered! Thorold finds

— That the Earl's greatest of all grand-mothers

Was grander daughter still — to that fair dame

Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!

[Goes.

10 Mildred. Is she — can she be really gone at last?

My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.

There!

[She returns to the seat in front.

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent

Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!

'Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up

The curse of the beginning; but I know It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all To dream my soul away and die upon.

[A noise without.

20 The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake

Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[The window opens softly.

A low voice sings.

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;

And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest:

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre

Hid 't the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,

Cush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:

Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling the bird's warble!

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were moonless, "Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless, "If you loved me not!" And I who — (ah, 30 for words of flame!) adore her, Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her —

[He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,

And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me!

[The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

Mildred. Sit, Henry — do not take my hand!

Mertoun.

'Tis mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much Is ended.

Mildred. What begins now?

Mertoun. Happiness Such as the world contains not.

Mildred. That is it. Our happiness would, as you say, exceed

The whole world's best of blisses: we — 40 do we

Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine

Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,

Like a death-knell, so much regarded once, And so familiar now; this will not be!

Mertoun. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face?

Compelled myself — if not to speak untruth,

Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside The truth, as — what had e'er prevailed on me

Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last

Your brother, the one scarer of your 50 dreams,

And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break On the strange unrest of our night, confused

With rain and stormy flaw — and will you see

No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,

And no expressless glory in the East? When I am by you, to be ever by you,

When I have won you and may worship you,

Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not 60 be"?

Mildred. Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.

Mertoun. Me — me alone, who sinned alone!

Mildred. The night
You likened our past life to — was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mertoun. Of your life
I spoke — what am I, what my life, to waste

A thought about when you are by me? — you

It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with me —

Perpetual dawn with me.

Mildred. Come what, come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!

Mertoun [after a pause]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold —
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mildred. They told me all.
I know all.

Mertoun. It will soon be over.

Mildred. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'tis over"? Is our meeting over?

Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love — with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow — with lips

Which make believe that when they strive
to form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached

A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that
stranger's . . . lip —

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that
is . . .

Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wicked-
ness

In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful
story,

The love, the shame, and the despair —
with them

Round me aghast as round some cursed
fount

That should spirt water, and spouts
blood. I'll not

. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should
draw

This vengeance down? I'll not affect a
grace

That's gone from me — gone once, and
gone for ever!

Mertoun. Mildred, my honour is your
own. I'll share

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring
forth

Some better way of saving both of us. 4

Mildred. I'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mertoun. When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!

Mildred. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my
words

And looks and gestures sooner. — How
you must

Despise me!

Mertoun. Mildred, break it if you
choose,

A heart the love of you uplifted — still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,

To heaven! but Mildred, answer me, —
first pace

The chamber with me — once again —
now, say

Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me 5

You see contempt (for you did say con-
tempt)

— Contempt for you in! I would pluck it
off

And cast it from me! — but no — no,
you'll not

Repeat that? — will you, Mildred, repeat
that?

Mildred. Dear Henry!

Mertoun. I was scarce a boy — e'en now
What am I more? And you were infant-
ine

When first I met you; why, your hair fell
loose

On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens
now

Only in the recalling how it burned

That morn to see the shape of many a 6
dream

— You know we boys are prodigal of
charms

To her we dream of — I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,

Might speak to her, might live and die
her own,

Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel
you not

That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power

to test

And weigh them in the diamond scales
of pride,

Resolved the treasure of a first and last

Heart's love shall have been bartered at its 7
worth,

— That now I think upon your purity

And utter ignorance of guilt — your own
Or other's guilt — the girlish undisguised

Delight at a strange novel prize — (I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)

If I, with fancy at its full, and reason

Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,

If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the scul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and
watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath — if
you

Accorded gifts and knew not they were
gifts —

If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish — (I was ignorant of even
My own desires — what then were you?)
if sorrow —

10 Sin — if the end came — must I now re-
nounce

My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!

Mildred. Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you — you
believe

That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We'll love on; you will love
me still.

Mertoun. Oh, to love less what one has
injured! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my
breast —

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee
into strength?

20 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care
for thee?

Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and
device!

Mildred, I love you and you love me.

Mildred. Go!
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-
night.

Mertoun. This is not our last meeting?

Mildred. One night more.

Mertoun. And then — think, then!

Mildred. Then, no
sweet courtship-days,

No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears
and hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

30 *Mertoun.* How else should love's per-
fected noontide follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day per-
form.

Mildred. So may it be! but —

You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the
walls?

Mertoun. Oh, trust me! Then our
final meeting's fixed

To-morrow night?

Mildred. Farewell! Stay, Henry
. . . wherefore?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
Receives him: now the moonlight as he
runs

Embraces him — but he must go — is
gone.

Ah, once again he turns — thanks, thanks,
my Love!

He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every
word!

I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.

There may be pardon yet: all's doubt
beyond

Surely the bitterness of death is past.

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, hastily.

Tresham. This way! In, Gerard,
quick!

[As GERARD enters, TRESHAM
secures the door.

Now speak! or, wait —
I'll bid you speak directly. [Seats himself.

Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You just now told me; it eludes me;
either

I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived

here?
Here in my house, your father kept our
woods

Before you?

Gerard. — As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,

Your bread.

Tresham. Yes, yes. You ever were of
all

The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

Gerard. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresham. Since when?

Gerard. At least
A month — each midnight has some
man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresham. Tush, "access" —

No wide words like "access" to me!
Gerard. He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

Tresham. The last great yew-tree?

Gerard. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then
he . . .

Tresham. Quick!

Gerard. Climbs up, and, where they
lessen at the top,

— I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think — for this I do not vouch — a line

That reaches to the lady's casement —
Tresham. — Which

He enters not! Gerard, some wretched
 fool

Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
 When such are young, it seems a precious
 thing

To have approached, — to merely have
 approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set
 Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not
 enter?

Gerard?

Gerard. There is a lamp that's full i' the
 midst,
 Under a red square in the painted glass
 Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresham. Leave that name out! Well?
 That lamp?

Gerard. — Is moved at midnight higher
 up

To one pane — a small dark-blue pane;
 he waits

For that among the boughs: at sight of
 that,

I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
 Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresham. — And stay?

Gerard. An hour, two hours.

Tresham. And this you saw
 Once? — twice? — quick!

Gerard. Twenty times.

Tresham. And what brings you
 Under the yew-trees?

Gerard. The first night I left
 My range so far, to track the stranger stag
 That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresham. Yet sent
 No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Gerard. But
 He came, my lord, the first time he was
 seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,
 From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresham [after a pause]. You have
 no cause

— Who could have cause to do my sister
 wrong?

Gerard. Oh, my lord, only once — let
 me this once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I
 noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
 Plucked me this way and that — fire if I
 turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
 If down I flung myself and strove to die.
 The lady could not have been seven years
 old

When I was trusted to conduct her safe
 Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-
 white fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
 Within a month. She ever had a smile

To greet me with — she . . . if it could
 undo

What's done, to lop each limb from off this
 trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you —
 I mean, I could not speak and bring her 40
 hurt

For Heaven's compelling. But when I
 was fixed

To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
 Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place
 too,

Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in
 doubts

What it behoved me do. This morn it
 seemed

Either I must confess to you, or die:

Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm

That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

Tresham. No —
 No, Gerard!

Gerard. Let me go!

Tresham. A man, you say:
 What man? Young? Not a vulgar 50
 hind? What dress?

Gerard. A slouched hat and a large dark
 foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form; even his face is
 hid;

But I should judge him young: no hind,
 be sure!

Tresham. Why?

Gerard. He is ever armed: his sword
 projects

Beneath the cloak.

Tresham. Gerard, — I will not say
 No word, no breath of this!

Gerard. Thank, thanks, my lord!
 [Goes.]

Tresham [paces the room. After a
 pause]. Oh, thoughts absurd! — as
 with some monstrous fact

Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems
 to give

Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
 The waters and the green delights of earth, 60
 The lie! I apprehend the monstrous
 fact —

Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
 And yield my reason up, inadequate

To reconcile what yet I do behold —

Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day
 outside:

This is my library, and this the chair
 My father used to sit in carelessly

After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
 Between his knees to question him: and
 here

Gerard our grey retainet, — as he says, 70
 Fed with our food, from sire to son, an
 age, —

Has told a story — I am to believe!

That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales
 are true,

Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err — much less,
confound

All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven

Keep me within its hand! — I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[As he sinks his head between his arms
on the table, GUENDOLEN'S voice
is heard at the door.

Lord Tresham! [She knocks.] Is Lord
Tresham there?

[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls
down the first book above him
and opens it.

Tresham. Come in! [She enters.
Ha, Guendolen! — good morning.

Guendolen. Nothing more?

Tresham. What should I say more?

Guendolen. Pleasant question! more?

10 This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's
brain

Last night till close on morning with "the
Earl,"

"The Earl" — whose worth did I assevera-
te

Till I am very fain to hope that . . .
Thorold,

What is all this? You are not well!

Tresham. Who, I?

You laugh at me.

Guendolen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show
some blot

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer
back

Than Arthur's time?

Tresham. When left you Mildred's
chamber?

Guendolen. Oh, late enough, I told you!
The main thing

20 To ask is, how I left her chamber, — sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresham. Send her here!

Guendolen. Thorold?

Tresham. I mean — acquaint
her, Guendolen,

— But mildly!

Guendolen. Mildly?

Tresham. Ah, you guessed aright!

I am not well: there is no hiding it.

But tell her I would see her at her leisure —

That is, at once! here in the library!

The passage in that old Italian book

We hunted for so long is found, say,
found —

30 And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come — and instantly!

Guendolen. I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have not
gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

Tresham.

Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call, — with Austin, if you
choose, —

In the adjoining gallery! There, go!

[GUENDOLEN goes.

Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and
conduct

Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me
catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.

If you had told me yesterday, "There's one

"You needs must circumvent and prac-
tise with,

"Entrap by policies, if you would worm

"The truth out: and that one is —
Mildred!" There,

There — reasoning is thrown away on it!

Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may
after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you
will!

Where I can comprehend nought, nought's
to say.

Or do, or think. Force on me but the
first

Abomination, — then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

Enter MILDRED.

Mildred.

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen

Thought you were pale; you are not pale.

That book?

That's Latin surely.

Tresham.

Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)

"Love conquers all things." What love
conquers them?

What love should you esteem — best love?

Mildred.

True love.

Tresham. I mean, and should have

said, whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mildred. The list's so long: there's

father's, mother's, husband's . . .

Tresham. Mildred, I do believe a

brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all.

For see now, only see! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st
gold

Of other loves — no gratitude to claim;

You never gave her life, not even aught

That keeps life — never tended her, in-
structed,

Enriched her — so, your love can claim
no right

O'er her save pure love's claim: that's
what I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never
hope

- To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
 As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
 Or played together in the meadow hay.
 Oh yes — with age, respect comes, and your worth
 Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
 There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
 — Much head these make against the new-comer!
 The startling apparition, the strange youth —
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
 This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
 . . . Her soul, that is, — the sister's soul!
 With her
 'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
 The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
 "Arise and come away!" Come whither? — far
 Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
 The brother's somewhat insignificant
 Array of rights! All which he knows before,
 Has calculated on so long ago!
 I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
 Contented with its little term of life,
 Intending to retire betimes, aware
 How soon the background must be placed for it,
 — I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
 All the world's love in its unworldliness.
Mildred. What is this for?
Tresham. This, Mildred, is it for!
 Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
 That's one of many points my haste left out —
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
 Between the being tied to you by birth,
 And you, until these slender threads compose
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
 So close you live and yet so far apart!
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery
 That makes her sacred? You — for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?
Mildred. Speak!
Tresham. I will.
 Is there a story men could — any man
- Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
 And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
 The world — the world of better men than I,
 And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
 [After a pause.] Not speak? Explain then!
 Clear it up then! Move
 Some of the miserable weight away
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
 Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
 [After a pause.] Is there a gallant that has night by night
 Admittance to your chamber?
 [After a pause] Then, his name!
 Till now, I only had a thought for you:
 But now, — his name!
Mildred. Thorold, do you devise
 Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
 There be! 'Tis nought to say that I'll endure
 And bless you, — that my spirit yearns to purge
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
 But do not plunge me into other guilt! 60
 Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.
Tresham. Then judge yourself! How should I act? Pronounce!
Mildred. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
 To die here in this chamber by that sword
 Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
 Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
 'Twere easily arranged for me: but you —
 What would become of you?
Tresham. And what will now
 Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine
 From every eye; the dead must heave 70
 their hearts
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
 They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
 We too will somehow wear this one day out:
 But with to-morrow hastens here — the Earl!
 The youth without suspicion face can come
 From Heaven and heart from . . .
 whence proceed such hearts?

I have dispatched last night at your command

A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow — here — thus much is said;
the rest

Is understood as if 'twere written down —
"His suit finds favor in your eyes." Now dictate

This morning's letter that shall countermand

Last night's — do dictate that!

Mildred. But, Thorold — if I will receive him as I said?

Tresham. The Earl?

Mildred. I will receive him.

Tresham [*starting up*]. Ho there!
Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!

The woman there!

Austin and Guendolen. How? *Mildred?*

Tresham. Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep

Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
— I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof
which holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams — never one like
her!

No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness

To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy
tread,

The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!

Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into — what you thought Mildred's, in a
word!

Know her!

Guendolen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at
least!

Thorold — she's dead, I'd say, but that she
stands

Rigid as stone and whiter!

Tresham. You have heard . . .

Guendolen. Too much! You must proceed no further.

Mildred. Yes —

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

Tresham. All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought
to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd
take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact

The prescribed vengeance — and one
word of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day
forth,

Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave; and
die

Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.

But this — that, fresh from last night's
pledge renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,
She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste and good
and pure,

— Invites me to betray him . . . who so
fit

As honour's self to cover shame's arch-
deed?

— That she'll receive Lord Mertoun —
(her own phrase) —

This, who could bear? Why, you have
heard of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet
have laughed,

"Talk not to me of torture — I'll betray
"No comrade I've pledged faith to!" —
you have heard

Of wretched women — all but Mildreds —
tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll

reply

"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
"In him, why should I leave him then for
gold,

"Repute or friends?" — and you have
felt your heart

Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,

You've felt they were God's men and
women still,

So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for
this,

I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then
Heaven do right

To both! It hears me now — shall judge
her then! [*As MILDRED faints and falls,*

TRESHAM rushes out.

Austin. Stay, Tresham, we'll accom-
pany you!

Guendolen. We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? Why,
where's my place

But by her side, and where yours but by mine?

Mildred — one word! Only look at me, then!

Austin. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.

She is unworthy to behold . . .
Guendolen. Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I approved your speech — if you (to put the thing

At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,
— If with a death-white woman you can help,

Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred, You left her — or if I, her cousin, friend This morning, playfellow but yesterday, Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,

"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round

And say, "Ah, that's to only signify
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself:

"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,

"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need —

"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join

"The praisers' chorus — when you're hemmed about

"With lives between you and detraction — lives

"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring

"Their worship throws about you, — then indeed,

"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?"
If so

We said, and so we did, — not Mildred there

Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by — by — your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face

Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,

And you cast out with hooting and contempt,

— Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain

Your side, go off with you and all your shame

To the next ditch you choose to die in!
Austin,

Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,
— here's

Your brother says he does not believe half —
No, nor half that — of all he heard! He 40
says,

Look up and take his hand!

Austin. Look up and take My hand, dear Mildred!

Mildred. I — I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold — and I had No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

Guendolen. Mildred!

Mildred. Require no further!
Did I dream

That I could palliate what is done? All's true.

Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?

Let go my hand! You do not know, I see. I thought that Thorold told you.

Guendolen. What is this?

Where start you to? 50

Mildred. Oh, Austin, loosen me! You heard the whole of it — your eyes were worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless

You stay to execute his sentence, loose My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

Guendolen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait

Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!

Only, when you shall want your bidding done,

How can we do it if we are not by?

Here's Austin waiting patiently your will! One spirit to command, and one to love 60

And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it — why, the world

Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,

By just such a beginning!

Mildred. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck

And sunk my head upon your breast, that I

Should weep again.

Guendolen. Let go her hand now, Austin!

Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think On the world's seemings and realities,

Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes. 70
Mildred. No — I cannot weep.

No more tears from this brain — no sleep — no tears!

O Guendolen, I love you!
Guendolen. Yes: and "love"

Is a short word that says so very much! It says that you confide in me.

Mildred. Confide!
Guendolen. Your lover's name, then!

I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!

Mildred. My friend

You know I cannot tell his name.

Guendolen. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
Mildred. Ah, do you ask me that? —
but I am fallen

So low!

Guendolen. You love him still, then?
Mildred. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so
young —

"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.

Guendolen. How could you let us
10 E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun
then?

Mildred. There is a cloud around me.
Guendolen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?

Mildred. I say there is a cloud . . .
Guendolen. No cloud to me!

Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
Mildred. What maddest fancy . . .

Guendolen [*calling aloud*]. Austin!
(spare your pains —

When I have got a truth, that truth I
keep) —

Mildred. By all you love, sweet Guen-
dolen, forbear!

Have I confided in you . . .
Guendolen. Just for this!

Austin! — Oh, not to guess it at the first!
20 But I did guess it — that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that
heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours — what other
way

Than this, not yours? The secret's
wholly mine!

Mildred. If you would see me die before
his face . . .

Guendolen. I'd hold my peace! And if
the Earl returns

To-night?

Mildred. Ah Heaven, he's lost!

Guendolen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Austin. Thorold's gone,
30 I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.

Guendolen. Gone? All thwarts us.
Mildred. Thorold too?

Guendolen. I have thought. First lead
this Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the
way,

The greatest comfort in the world. You
said

There was a clue to all. Remember,
Sweet,

He said there was a clue! I hold it.
Come!

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue
under MILDRED'S window. A light
seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath — the orchard — I have trav-
ersed glades

And dells and bosky paths which used to
lead

Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now
they tend

Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees
ope wide,

And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put

Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun

Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering
scheme

Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their
hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope
anew.

But I . . . to hope that from a line like
ours

No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from
these old

Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,

Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,

On many a beauty's whimple — would
proceed

No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.

Why came I here. What must I do?
[*A bell strikes.*] A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah,
I catch

— Woods, river, plains, I catch your mean-
ing now,

And I obey you! Hist! This tree will
serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees.
After a pause, enter MERTOUN
cloaked as before.*

Mertoun. Not time! Beat out thy last
voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought
the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing
through

The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by
thorn,

All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day
must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope
renewed:

Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.
*[The light is placed above
in the purple pane.]*

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now

It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

*[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of
the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.]*

Unhand me — peasant, by your grasp!
Here's gold.

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd
pluck

A branch from the white-blossomed shrub
beneath

The casement there. Take this, and hold
your peace.

Tresham. Into the moonlight yonder,
come with me!

Out of the shadow!

Mertoun. I am armed, fool!

Tresham. Yes,
Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?

My hand is on your throat — refuse! —

Mertoun. That voice!

Where have I heard . . . no — that was
mild and slow.

I'll come with you. *[They advance.]*

Tresham. You're armed: that's well.
Declare

Your name: who are you?

Mertoun. *[Tresham! — she is lost!]*

Tresham. Oh, silent? Do you know,
you bear yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look

When they're detected, still your kind has
looked!

The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,

But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.

Your name!

Mertoun. I do conjure Lord Tresham —
ay,

Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail —
That he for his own sake forbear to ask

My name! As heaven's above, his future
weal

Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.

40

Know me, Lord Tresham!

[He throws off his disguises.]
Tresham. Mertoun!

[After a pause.] Draw now!

Mertoun. Hear me

But speak first!

Tresham. Not one least word on your
life!

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you
live

And yet seem what you seem! No doubt
'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and
sin.

We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,

Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense, 50

The old belief — a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!

Mertoun. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing — for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

Tresham. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like
yourself,

How must one rouse his ire? A blow? —
that's pride

No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does
one not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of
these?

Mertoun. 'Twixt him and me and Mil- 60
dred, Heaven be judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my
lord!

[He draws and, after a few passes, falls.]
Tresham. You are not hurt?

Mertoun. You'll hear me now!

Tresham. But rise!

Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, say I not
"you'll hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,

But — I suppose — the thought that
presently

He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

Tresham. Not hurt? It cannot be!

You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have 70

returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mertoun. My lord —

Tresham. How young he is!

Mertoun. Lord Tresham, I am very
young, and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently, —

Tresham. Can you stay here till I return with help?

Mertoun. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy

I did you grievous wrong and knew it not — Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,

I could not find what seemed a better way To right you than I took: 'my life — you feel

How less than nothing were the giving you The life you've taken! But I thought my way

The better — only for your sake and hers:

10 And as you have decided otherwise, Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you! Now say — instruct me — think!

Can you, from the brief minutes I have left, Eke out my reparation? Oh think — think!

For I must wring a partial — dare I say, Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresham. I do Forgive you.

Mertoun. Wait and ponder that great word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope To speak to you of — Mildred!

20 *Tresham.* Mertoun, haste And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you Should tell me for a novelty you're young, Thoughtless, unable to recall the past. Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this about Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love Of you — (what passion like a boy's for one

Like you?) — that ruined me! I dreamed of you —

30 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere, The scholar and the gentleman. I burned

To knit myself to you: but I was young, And your surpassing reputation kept me So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love? With less of love, my glorious yesterday Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago. Even now, how happy we had been! And yet

I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!

Let me look up into your face; I feel

40 'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.

Where? where?

[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life That's bleeding fast away! I'll live — must live,

There, if you'll only turn me I shall live And save her! Tresham — oh, had you but heard!

Had you but heard! What right was yours to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,

And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,

"All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned and die:

Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,

And God will judge you.

Tresham. Yes, be satisfied! That process is begun.

Mertoun. And she sits there Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her —

You, not another — say, I saw him die As he breathed this, "I love her" — you don't know

What those three small words mean! Say, loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to death With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,

Who had no pity, will have no remorse, Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,

Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape

So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest, With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds

Done to you? — heartless men shall have my heart,

And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,

Aware, perhaps, of every blow — oh God! —

Upon those lips — yet of no power to tear The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred!

Leave Their honourable world to them! For God

We're good enough, though the world casts us out. [A whistle is heard.

Tresham. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN, with lights.

No one speak!

You see what's done.

I cannot bear another voice.

Mertoun. There's light — Light all about me, and I move to it.

Tresham, did I not tell you — did you not just promise to deliver words of mine

To Mildred?

Tresham. I will bear those words to her.
Mertoun. Now?

Tresham. Now. Lift you the body,
 and leave me
 The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN,
 he turns suddenly.*]

Mertoun. I knew they turned me: turn
 me not from her!

There! stay you! there! [*Dies.*]

Guendolen [*after a pause*]. Austin, remain
 you here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with
 help:

Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
 To Mildred.

Tresham. Guendolen, I hear each word
 You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
 His message? Did you hear my promise?
 I,

And only I, see Mildred.

Guendolen. She will die.

Tresham. Oh no, she will not die! I
 dare not hope

She'll die. What ground have you to think
 she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

Austin. Had we but arrived
 Before you fought!

Tresham. There was no fight at all.
 He let me slaughter him — the boy! I'll
 trust

The body there to you and Gerard — thus!
 Now bear him on before me.

Austin. Whither bear him?

Tresham. Oh, to my chamber! When
 we meet there next,

We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*]

Will she die, Guendolen?

Guendolen. Where are you taking me?

Tresham. He fell just here.

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole
 life

— You who have nought to do with Mer-
 toun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
 Shall you e'er walk this way if you can
 help?

When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
 Through our ancestral grounds, will not a
 shade

Be ever on the meadow and the waste —
 Another kind of shade than when the night
 Shuts the woodside with all its whispers
 up?

But will you ever so forget his breast
 As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
 Under the black yew avenue? That's
 well!

You turn your head: and I then? —

Guendolen. What is done

Is done. My care is for the living.
 Thorold,

Bear up against this burden; more re-
 mains

To set the neck to!

Tresham. Dear and ancient trees
 My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
 What have I done that, like some fabled
 crime

Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
 Her miserable dance amidst you all?

Oh, never more for me shall winds intone

With all your tops a vast antiphony,
 Demanding and responding in God's
 praise!

Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell —
 farewell!

SCENE II. — MILDRED'S chamber.
 MILDRED alone.

He comes not! I have heard of those who
 seemed

Resourceless in prosperity, — you thought
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed;
 yet

Did they so gather up their diffused
 strength

At her first menace, that they bade her
 strike,

And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to

Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe
 fell,

And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
 Else should I bear that Henry comes not?

— fails

Just this first night out of so many nights?
 Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,

As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd
 love

No more — contrive no thousand happy
 ways

To hide love from the loveless, any more.
 I think I might have urged some little point

In my defence, to Thorold; he was breath-
 less

For the least hint of a defence: but no,
 The first shame over, all that would might
 fall.

No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
 The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must
 have crept

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
 Her lover — oh, I dare not look upon

Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis
 she,

Mildred, will break her heart, not I!
 The world

Forsakes me: only Henry's left me —
 left?

When I have lost him, for he does not come, 70
 And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break

up
 This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
 By any means or any messenger!

- Tresham* [without]. Mildred!
Mildred. Come in!
 Heaven hears me!
 [Enter TRESHAM.] You? alone?
 Oh, no more cursing!
Tresham. Mildred, I must sit.
 There — you sit!
Mildred. Say it, Thorold — do not look
 The curse! deliver all you come to say!
 What must become of me? Oh, speak
 that thought
 Which makes your brow and cheeks so
 pale!
Tresham. My thought?
Mildred. All of it!
Tresham. How we waded years —
 ago —
 After those water-lilies, till the plash.
 I know not how, surprised us; and you
 dared
 Neither advance nor turn back: so, we
 stood
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came —
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
 For once more reaching the relinquished
 prize!
 How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying
 men's!
Mildred. —
Mildred. You call me kindlier by my
 name
 Than even yesterday: what is in that?
Tresham. It weighs so much upon my
 mind that I
 This morning took an office not my own!
 I might . . . of course, I must be glad or
 grieved,
 Content or not, at every little thing
 That touches you. I may with a wrung
 heart
 Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
 Will you forgive me?
Mildred. Thorold? do you mock?
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say
 that word!
Tresham. Forgive me, Mildred! — are
 you silent, Sweet?
Mildred [starting up]. Why does not
 Henry Mertoun come to-night?
 Are you, too, silent?
 [Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing
 to his scabbard, which is empty.
 Ah, this speaks for you!
 You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now
 proceed!
 What is it I must pardon? This and all?
 Well, I do pardon you — I think I do.
 Thorold, how very wretched you must be!
Tresham. He bade me tell you . . .
Mildred. What I do forbid
 Your utterance of! So much that you may
 tell
 And will not — how you murdered him
 . . . but, no!
- You'll tell me that he loved me, never
 more
 Than bleeding out his life there: must I
 say
 "Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon
 you.
Tresham. You cannot, Mildred! for
 the harsh words, yes;
 Of this last deed Another's judge: whose
 doom
 I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
Mildred. Oh, true! There's nought
 for me to pardon! True!
 You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
 Death makes me sure of him for ever!
 You
 Tell me his last words? He shall tell me
 them,
 And take my answer — not in words, but
 reading
 Himself the heart I had to read him late,
 Which death . . .
Tresham. Death? You are dying
 too? Well said
 Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd
 die:
 But she was sure of it.
Mildred. Tell Guendolen
 I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
Tresham. Him you loved:
 And me?
Mildred. Ah, Thorold! Was't not
 rashly done
 To quench that blood, on fire with youth
 and hope
 And love of me — whom you loved too,
 and yet
 Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
 While you were slaying him? Oh, doubt-
 lessly
 You let him speak his poor confused boy's-
 speech
 — Do his poor utmost to disarm your
 wrath
 And respite me! — you let him try to give
 The story of our love and ignorance,
 And the brief madness and the long de-
 spair —
 You let him plead all this, because your
 code
 Of honour bids you hear before you
 strike:
 But at the end, as he looked up for life
 Into your eyes — you struck him down!
Tresham. No! No!
 Had I but heard him — had I let him speak
 Half the truth — less — had I looked long
 on him
 I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
 The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered
 all
 The story ere he told it: I saw through
 The troubled surface of his crime and yours
 A depth of purity immovable,

Had I but glanced, where all seemed
turbidest

Had gleamed some inlet to the calm be-
neath;

I would not glance: my punishment's at
hand.

There, Mildred, is the truth! and you —
say on —

You curse me?

Mildred. As I dare approach that
Heaven

Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace
from stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven, — I — forgive not,

But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of
souls! *[Falls on his neck.]*

There! Do not think too much upon the
past!

The cloud that's broke was all the same a
cloud

While it stood up between my friend and
you;

You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is
that

So past retrieve? I have his heart, you
know;

I may dispose of it: I give it you!

It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me,
Henry! *[Dies.]*

Tresham. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I
am glad

In thy full gladness!

Guendolen [without]. Mildred! Tresh-
am!

[Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!

That's well.

Tresham. Oh, better far than that!

Guendolen. She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

Tresham. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then
died:

You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

Austin. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thor-
old?

Guendolen. White

As she, and whiter! Austin! quick —
this side!

Austin. A froth is oozing through his
clenched teeth;

Both lips, where they're not bitten through,
are black:

Speak, dearest Thorold!

Tresham. Something does weigh down

My neck beside her weight: thanks: I 30
should fall

But for you, Austin, I believe! — there,
there,

'Twill pass away soon! — ah, — I had for-
gotten:

I am dying.

Guendolen. Thorold — Thorold — why
was this?

Tresham. I said, just as I drank the
poison off,

The earth would be no longer earth to
me,

The life out of all life was gone from
me.

There are blind ways provided, the fore-
done

Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque
defile

By the conspicuous portal: I am through — 40
Just through!

Guendolen. Don't leave him, Austin!
Death is close.

Tresham. Already Mildred's face is
peacefuller.

I see you, Austin — feel you: here's my
hand,

Put yours in it — you, Guendolen, yours
too!

You're lord and lady now — you're
Treshams; name

And fame are yours: you hold our
'scutcheon up.

Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot
came

And the first blood came. To the vain
world's eye

All's gules again: no care to the vain 50
world,

From whence the red was drawn!

Austin. No blot shall come!

Tresham. I said that: yet it did come.
Should it come,

Vengeance is God's, not man's. Re-
member me! *[Dies.]*

Guendolen [letting fall the pulseless arm].
Ah, Thorold, we can but — remember
you!

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY;

A PLAY.

1844.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY
TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

LONDON: 1844.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm
spring-weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?
— *Hanmer.*

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of
Juliers and Cleves.
SABYNE, ADOLF, her attendants.
GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLU-
GNET, courtiers.
VALENCE, advocate of Cleves.
PRINCE BERTHOLD, claimant of the Duchy.
MELCHIOR, his confidant.

PLACE. — *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I.

MORNING.

SCENE. — *A corridor leading to the
Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY and other
Courtiers, round GUIBERT, who is
silently reading a paper: as he drops
it at the end —

Guibert. That this should be her birth-
day; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our
liege;
And that this also must become the day ...
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Courtier. Ay, indeed?

2nd Courtier. Well, Guibert?

3rd Courtier. But your news
my friend, your news!
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince
Berthold's pleasure,
The better for us all: how writes the
Prince?
Give me! I'll read it for the common
good.

Guibert. In time, sir, — but till time
comes, pardon me!
Our old Duke just disclosed his child's
retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died: this birthday was the day, last
year,
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein —
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived —
queen

Over the water-buds, — to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we
stand;

Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his
cap:

To-day's much such another sunny day! 20

Gaucelme. Come, Guibert, this out-
grows a jest, I think!

You're hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson, you pretend.

Guibert. What lesson, sir?
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself?
Why, no: and therefore with your good
example,
(— Ho, Master Adolf!) — to myself I'll
look.

Enter ADOLF.

Guibert. The Prince's letter; why, of all
men else,

Comes it to me?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert! 'Twas the Prince's express 30
charge,

His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Guibert.

Enough!

[*ADOLF retires.*]

Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have
gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit?
Who asks may have it, with my blessing,
and —

10 This to present our lady. Who'll accept?
You, — you, — you? There it lies, and
may, for me!

Mausfroy [a youth, *picking up the paper,*
reads aloud]. "Prince Berthold,
proved by titles following

"Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
"To claim his own, with licence from the
Pope,

"The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and
France"

Gaucelme. Sufficient "titles following,"
I judge!

Don't read another! Well, — "to claim
his own?"

Mausfroy. "— And take possession of
the Duchy held

"Since twelve months, to the true heir's
prejudice,

20 "By" . . . *Colombe*, Juliers' mistress, so
she thinks,

And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find.
Who wants the place and paper? *Gui-*
bert's right.

I hope to climb a little in the world, —
I'd push my fortunes, — but, no more
than he,

Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, per-
haps,

There's nothing left to call her own. Sir
Clugnet,

You famish for promotion; what say you?

Clugnet [an old man]. To give this letter
were a sort, I take it,

30 Of service: services ask recompense:
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

Guibert. The castle? Oh, you'd share
her fortunes? Good!

Three walls stand upright, full as good as
four,

With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clugnet. Oh, — but the town?

Guibert. Five houses, fifteen huts;

A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis
judged;

And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clugnet. Still, there's some revenue?

Guibert. Else Heaven forfend!

You hang a beacon out, should fogs in-
crease;

So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood 40
steer

Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to
you,

Their grateful raftsmen flings a guilder in;
— That's if he mean to pass your way next
time.

Clugnet. If not?

Guibert. Hang guilders, then! He
blesses you.

Clugnet. What man do you suppose
me? Keep your paper!

And, let me say, it shows no handsome
spirit

To dally with misfortune: keep your
place!

Gaucelme. Some one must tell her.

Guibert. Some one may: you may!

Gaucelme. Sir *Guibert*, 'tis no trifle turns
me sick

Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine, 50
But this goes near it. Where's there news
at all?

Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, e'en while we crowned
the girl,

That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
That one, confessed her father's cousin's
child,

And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the

Duke's,
Claimed Juliers? — nor, as he preferred
his claim,

That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance? — I or you, 60

Or any one except the lady's self?

Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
To break the business to her! Things
might change:

At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
Next mummary over first: and so the edge

Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's

she
— Wreathing her hair, a song between her

lips,

With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood 70

About the world, by feigning grievances —
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,

And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try

mine!

And, since this must be carried . . .
Guibert [snatching the paper from him].

By your leave!

Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not
serve the Prince

So much as you expect, this course you'd
take.

If she leaves quietly her palace, — well;
But if she died upon its threshold, — no:

He'd have the trouble of removing her. 80

Come, gentles, we're all — what the devil knows!

You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside:

You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession — never blush!
You're from my province, and, be comforted,

They tell of it with wonder to this day.
You can afford to let your talent sleep.
We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:

There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child

10 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!

There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything

More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:

And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart

Coolly as Gaucelme could and would!
No haste!

His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
We'll not advance to his perfection yet —
Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy

For ever as a courtier!

Gaucelme. Here's a coil!

20 And, count us, will you? Count its residue,
This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!

A birthday, too, a gratulation day!

I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!

Maufroy and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He's right: that does say something: that's bare truth.

Ten — twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!

Guibert. Pooh — is it audience hour?
The vestibule

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gaucelme. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*]
Who's outside?

Guibert. Oh, your looks suffice!

30 Nobody waiting?

Maufroy [*looking through the door-folds*].
Scarce our number!

Guibert. 'Sdeath!

Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

As thus to frighten all the world!

Gaucelme. The world
Lives out of doors, sir — not with you and me

By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,

Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free

To every wind from every compass-point,

And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.

The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee —

Why should they wait for winter-time?
'Tis instinct.

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Guibert. That's their craft?

And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth

That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,

Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!
Well, 'tis my comfort, you could never call me

The People's Friend! The People keep their word —

I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People

Are talked of! Then, their speeches — 50
no one tongue

Found respite, not a pen had holiday
For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!

Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,

They wince and fret enough, but pay they must

— We manage that, — so, pay with a good grace

They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next

Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public — there they have us if they will, 60
We're at their mercy after that, you see!

For one tax not ten devils could extort —
Over and above necessity, a grace;

This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit —
Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny,

And crowding attestation, all works well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!

These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings low,

Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,

With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth —

So tender they their love; and, tender 70
made,

Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
As if their souls were any longer theirs!

As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their neck,

Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
And take them for the brute they boast themselves!

Stay — there's a bustle at the outer door —
And somebody entreating . . . that's my name!

Adolf, — I heard my name!

Adolf.

'Twas probably

The suitor.

Guibert. Oh, there is one?

Adolf. With a suit

He'd fain enforce in person.

Guibert. The good heart

— And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!

Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel

... ay,

The very cloak my comrades tore!

Guibert. Why tore?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:

Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts

to Lest he should miss the moment.

Guibert. Where's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more:

They have ado enough to thrust him back.

Guibert. Ay — but my name, I caught?

Adolf. Oh, sir — he said

— What was it? — You had known him formerly,

And, he believed, would help him did you guess

He waited now; you promised him as much:

The old plea! 'Faith, he's back, — renews the charge!

[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys, peace outside —

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

to *Gaucelme.* My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,

A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon

He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow

At each repulse —

Gaucelme. I noticed he'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile

Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,

And presently turns round, quiet again,

With some new pretext for admittance. — Back!

[*To GUIBERT.*] — Sir, he has seen you!

Now cross halberts! Ha —

30 *Pascal* is prostrate — there lies Fabian too! No passage! Whither would the madman press?

Close the doors quick on me!

Guibert. Too late! He's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress,

VALENCE.

Valence. Sir Guibert, will you help

me? — me, that come

Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,

To represent their heights and depths of woe

Before our Duchess and obtain relief!

Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:

But not a common hindrance drives me back

On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit With hope for the first time, which sent me 40 forth.

Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!

Who followed me — your strongest — many a mile

That I might go the fresher from their ranks,

— Who sit — your weakest — by the city gates,

To take me fuller of what news I bring

As I return — for I must needs return!

— Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,

To turn them back upon the old despair —

Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus — So, I do — any way you please — implore! 50

If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?

Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!

Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,

Your words and deeds caught up at second hand, —

Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,

O, the very levity and recklessness

Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.

Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,

Is Cleves forgotten? Then, remember me!

You promised me that you would help me 60 once,

For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Guibert. And who may you be, friend?

Valence. Valence of Cleves.

Guibert. Valence of . . . not the advocate of Cleves,

I owed my whole estate to, three years back?

Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,

You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land

By some knave's-pretext — (eh? when you refused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!) — and you've heard

How I recovered it by miracle

— (When I refused her!) Here's the very friend, 70

— Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!

Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you!

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I — I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time. I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to
court

— "No!" — well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here — "No!" — our
Duchess, then, —

A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown

10 Complete the forehead pale and tresses
pure . . .

Valence. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.

Guibert. So much for taste! But
"come," —

So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's
daughter,

And with an equal chance you get all three.
If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Valence. Straight to the palace-portal,
sir, I came —

Guibert. — And said? —

Valence. — That I had brought
the miseries

20 Of a whole city to relieve.

Guibert. — Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me,
indeed,

And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,

My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; which, if I procure, —

That paper's closely written — by Saint
Paul,

Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,

Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miseries" from first to
last?

30 *Valence.* How should they let me pause
or turn aside?

Gaucelme [to *Valence*]. My worthy sir,
one question! You've come straight
From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any
talk

At Cleves about our lady?

Valence. Much.

Gaucelme. And what?

Valence. Her wish was to redress all
wrongs she knew.

Gaucelme. That, you believed?

Valence. You see me, sir!

Gaucelme. — Nor stopped
Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,
For any — rumours you might find afloat?

Valence. I had my townsmen's wrongs
to busy me.

Gaucelme. This is the lady's birthday,
do you know?

— Her day of pleasure?

Valence. — That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the
watch

To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too

May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their birthright,
sir!

Gaucelme [aside to *Guibert*]. Sir *Guibert*,
here's your man! No scruples
now —

You'll never find his like! Time presses
hard.

I've seen your drift and *Adolf's* too, this
while,

But you can't keep the hour of audience
back

Much longer, and at noon the Prince
arrives.

[Pointing to *Valence*.] Entrust him with
it — fool no chance away!

Guibert. Him?

Gaucelme. — With the missive! What's
the man to her?

Guibert. No bad thought! Yet, 'tis
yours, who ever played

The tempting serpent: else 'twere no bad
thought!

I should — and do — mistrust it for your
sake,

Or else . . .

*Enter an Official who communicates
with ADOLF.*

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the
court.

Guibert. Give us a moment, *Adolf*!
Valence, friend,

I'll help you. We of the service, you're to
mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . .
the folk

Outside, get access through our help
alone;

— Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,

To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Valence. I grieve that I must ask, —
This being, yourself admit, the custom
here, —

To what the price of such a favour
mounts?

Guibert. Just so! You're not without
a courtier's tact.

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.
Valence. Yours is? —
Guibert. A trifle: here's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her
Grace —
I say, not mine — these say, not theirs —
such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve
us all
And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay
"This paper at the Duchess' feet!"
Valence. No more?
I thank you, sir!
Adolf. Her Grace receives the court,
Guibert [aside]. Now, *sursum corda*.
quothe the mass-priest! Do —
Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings
back;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck
me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or
yours!
[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves,
and move toward the door.*]
After me, *Valence*! So, our famous *Cleves*
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy
their lace?
And dear enough — it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, *Valence*, is our Great State Hall you
cross;
Yon grey urn's veritable *marcasite*,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your
foot
... But you don't speak, friend *Valence*!
Valence. I shall speak.
Gaucelme [aside to *GUIBERT*]. *Guibert*
— it were no such ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you
shall do.
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and
cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll
perish
"Beside your Grace!" — and so give me
the cue
To ...
Guibert. — Clap your hand to note-
book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I con-
ceive.
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, *Valence*, speak, or I
shall half suspect
You're plotting to supplant us, me the first
I' the lady's favour! Is't the grand
harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses
you?

— Which of her virtues you'll apostro-
phise?

Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curved, not unbecoming
hair?

Or what else ponder you? 40

Valence. My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II.

NOON.

SCENE. — *The Presence-chamber.**The DUCHESS and SABYNE.*

The Duchess. Announce that I am
ready for the court!

Sabyne. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I
think; your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have
arrived.

The Duchess. Let those not yet arrived,
then, keep away!

'Twas me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, be-
side,

This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

Sabyne. Forgive me!

The Duchess. Stay, *Sabyne*; let me
hasten to make sure

Of one true thanker: here with you begins 50

My audience, claim you first its privilege!
It is my birth's event they celebrate:

You need not wish me more such happy
days,

But — ask some favour! Have you none
to ask?

Has *Adolf* none, then? this was far from
least

Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural

Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing

good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself. 60

You ask my leave to-day to marry *Adolf*?
The rest is my concern.

Sabyne. Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein, — but, for
Adolf ...

The Duchess. "But"? You have not,
sure, changed in your regard

And purpose towards him?
Sabyne. We change?

The Duchess. Well then? Well?
Sabyne. How could we two be happy,
and, most like,

Leave *Juliers*, when — when ... but
'tis audience-time!

The Duchess. "When, if you left me, I
were left indeed!"

Would you subjoin that? — Bid the court approach!

— Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?

Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss, If friends detain me, and get blame for it, There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng

Scarce one half comes now.

Sabyne [aside]. One half? No, alas!

The Duchess. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud

Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart. They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,

10 Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes, May grow more foolish and more arrogant, They please to apprehend! I thank their love.

Admit them!

Sabyne [aside]. How much has she really learned?

The Duchess. Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits?

— Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised

From nothing — come, he's faithful to me, come!

(*Sabyne*, I should but be the prouder — yes,

The fitter to comport myself aright)

Not Romuald? Xavier — what said he to that?

20 For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!

[*SABYNE goes out.*]

The Duchess. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too.

Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps —

The water-breeze again, the birds again. — It cannot be! It is too late to be!

What part had I, or choice in all of it?

Hither they brought me; I had not to think

Nor care, concern myself with doing good Or ill, my task was just — to live, — to live,

And, answering ends there was no need explain,

30 To render Juliers happy — so they said.

All could not have been falsehood: some was love,

And wonder and obedience. I did all They looked for: why then cease to do it now?

Yet this is to be calmly set aside,

And — ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,

Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .

It cannot nor it shall not be! His right? Well then, he has the right, and I have not,

— But who bade all of you surround my life

And close its growth up with your ducal crown

Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?

I could have been like one of you, — loved, hoped,

Feared, lived and died like one of you — but you

Would take that life away and give me this, And I will keep this! I will face you!

Come!

Enter the COURTIERs and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The Duchess [aside, as they pay their devoir]. The same words, the same faces, — the same love!

I have been overfearful. These are few; But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.

As many come as may; and if no more, 'Tis that these few suffice — they do suffice!

What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,

I feared too soon. [*To the Courtiers.*] I thank you, sirs: all thanks!

Valence [aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group to another, conversing].

'Tis she — the vision this day last year brought,

When, for a golden moment at our Cleves, She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke

— Not that she could have noted the recluse

— Ungainly, old before his time — who gazed.

Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and 60 that gaze

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!

She was above it — but so would not sink My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers —

Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul

Ere she retired and left me — them? She turns —

There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground

Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper*]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!

The Duchess [to the Courtiers]. Nay, compliment enough! and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such 70 years.

'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth
escaped,
I tasted life's pure pleasure — one such,
pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed — and youth's
for pleasure:

Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

Gaucelme. So, pay, and pleasure paid
for, thinks your Grace,
Should never go together?

Guibert. How, Sir Gaucelme?
Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
At the snatched breathing-intervals of
work?

As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
to When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.
Eat first, then work upon the strength of
food!

The Duchess. True: you enable me to
risk my future,

By giving me a past beyond recall.
I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:
Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!
And so, — what news, Sir Guibert, spoke
you of?

[As they advance a little, and
GUIBERT speaks —

— That gentleman?

Valence [aside]. I feel her eyes on me.

Guibert [to VALENCE]. The Duchess,
sir, in lines to hear your suit.

Advance! He is from Cleves.

Valence [coming forward. Aside]. Their
wrongs — their wrongs!

to *The Duchess.* And you, sir, are from
Cleves? How fresh in mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
With insuppressive joy on every face!

What says my ancient famous happy
Cleves?

Valence. Take the truth, lady — you are
made for truth!

So think my friends: nor do they less
deserve

The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all — nay, when you only
know

30 How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes
apart

Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
Their means sufficed to muster trap-
pings for,

Might fill the foreground, occupy your
sight

With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves

How, when to daylight these crept out,
once more,

Clutching, unconscious, each his empty
rags

Whence the scant coin, which had not half 40
bought bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece
by piece,

And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent
them

To burn, or flowers to strew, before your
path

— How, when the golden flood of music
and bliss

Ebb'd, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery
bare

— Then I, their friend, had only to sug-
gest

"Saw she the horror as she saw the
pomp!"

And as one man they cried "He speaks the
truth:

"Show her the horror! Take from our 50
own mouths

"Our wrongs and show them, she will see
them too!"

This they cried, lady! I have brought the
wrongs.

The Duchess. Wrongs? Cleves has
wrongs — apparent now and thus?

I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!

Valence. (There, Cleves!) In this!
(What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are re-
duced

Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I
forget

I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt.

I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet. 60

[Presenting GUIBERT'S paper.

Guibert. Stay! for the present . . .

The Duchess. Stay, sir? I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater
pride

Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you,
sir!

[The DUCHESS reads hastily; then,
turning to the Courtiers —

What have I done to you? Your deed or
mine

Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,

Than church-flowers, born this season;
wrote the words

In the saint's-book that sanctified them
first.

For such a flower, you plucked me; well,
you erred —

Well, 'twas a weed; remove the eye-sore 70
quick!

But should you not remember it has lain
steeped in the candles' glory, pearly

shined,

Nearer God's Mother than most earthly
things?

— That if't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath —

That the one day it boasted was God's day?

Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,

Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,

Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet

May yield some wandering insect rest and food:

So, fling me forth, and — all is best for all!

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke it seems —

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's —

10 Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities, — But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!

Find out their love, — I could not; find their fear, —

I would not; find their like, — I never shall,

Among the flowers! [*Taking off her coronet.*]

Colombe of Ravestein Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Valence [*advancing to* GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert, knight, they call you — this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court. You dared make me your instrument,

I find;

20 For that, so sure as you and I are men, We reckon to the utmost presently:

But as you are a courtier and I none, Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her: — I am degraded — you let me address!

Out of her presence, all is plain enough What I shall do — but in her presence, too,

30 Surely there's something proper to be done. [*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright —

May I not strike this man to earth?

The Courtiers [*as GUIBERT springs forward, withholding him*]. Let go!

— The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a churl?

The Duchess [*to* VALENCE]. Oh, be acquainted with your party, sir!

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts; A lion crests him for a cognizance;

"Scorning to waver" — that's his 'scutcheon's word;

His office with the new Duke — probably The same in honour as with me; or more,

40 By so much as this gallant turn deserves. He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times

The rank and influence that remain with her

Whose part you take! So, lest for taking it

You suffer . . .

Valence. I may strike him then to earth?

Guibert [*falling on his knee*]. Great and dear lady, pardon me! Hear once!

Believe me and be merciful — be just! I could not bring myself to give that paper

Without a keener pang than I dared meet — And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy

here — No one dared meet it. Protestation's so cheap, —

But, if to die for you did any good, [*To GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir?

Say your worst of me!

But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.

And since the hint of a resistance, even, Would just precipitate, on you the first,

A speedier ruin — I shall not deny, Saving myself indubitable pain,

I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)

By showing that your only subject found To carry the sad notice, was the man 60

Precisely ignorant of its contents; A nameless, mere provincial advocate;

One whom 'twas like you never saw before, Never would see again. All has gone

wrong; But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!

The Duchess. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?

— (I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Guibert [*rising, to* VALENCE]. Sir, and you?

Valence. — Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with. The Duchess. One I have never seen, 70

much less obliged?

Valence. Dare I speak, lady?

The Duchess. Dare you!

Heard you not

I rule no longer?

Valence. Lady, if your rule Were based alone on such a ground as these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*]

Could furnish you, — abjure it! They have hidden

A source of true dominion from your sight. The Duchess. You hear them — no

such source is left . . .

Valence. Hear Cleves! Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,

Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,

Sure of a like to-morrow — but as sure

Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoever
things may.

What curbs the brute-force instinct in its
hour?

What makes — instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or car-
bine's trick,

— What makes that there's an easier help,
they think,

For you, whose name so few of them can
spell,

Whose face scarce one in every hundred
saw, —

10 You simply have to understand their
wrongs,

And wrongs will vanish — so, still trades
are plied,

And swords lie rusting, and myself stand
here?

There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its
cure:

And these embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first
received,

From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a
ground,

20 Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,

Of this man — this — and this?

The Duchess [after a pause]. You come
from Cleves:

How many are at Cleves of such a mind?
Valence [from his paper]. "We, all the
manufacturers of Cleves —"

The Duchess. Or stay, sir — lest I seem
too covetous —

Are you my subject? such as you describe,
Am I to you, though to no other man?

Valence [from his paper]. — "Valence,
ordained your Advocate at Cleves" —

The Duchess [replacing the coronet].
Then I remain Cleves' Duchess!

Take you note,

30 While Cleves but yields one subject of this
stamp,

I stand her lady till she waves me off!

For her sake, all the Prince claims I with-
hold;

Laugh at each menace; and, his power
defying,

Return his missive with its due contempt!
[Casting it away.]

Guibert [picking it up]. — Which to the
Prince I will deliver, lady,

(Note it down, Gaucelme) — with your
message too!

The Duchess. I think the office is a sub-
ject's, sir!

— Either . . . how style you him? —
my special guarder

The Marshal's — for who knows but vio-
lence

May follow the delivery? — Or, perhaps, 40
My Chancellor's — for law may be to urge
On its receipt! — Or, even my Chamber-
lain's —

For I may violate established form!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, — for the half-hour
till this service ends,

Will you become all these to me?

Valence [falling on his knee]. My liege!

The Duchess. Give me!

*[The Courtiers present their
badges of office.]*

[Putting them by.] Whatever was their
virtue once,

They need new consecration. [*Raising
VALENCE.*] Are you mine?

I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread! 50
I'll stand by her, — And I, whate'er be-
tide!

Guibert [to VALENCE]. Well done, well
done, sir! I care not who knows,
You have done nobly and I envy you —
Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:

For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too, the remark that its mere
wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our
prize.

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at — much would zeal and
faith subsist

Without these also! Yet, let these be
stopped,

Our wages discontinue, — then, indeed, 60

Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)
Are not released — having been pledged
away

I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No,
no —

I'm right, sir — but your wrong is better
still,

If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you
please —

If you like, — fight you, as you seem to
wish —

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . . 70

Gaucelme. — Or, kinder still, you'll in-
troduce, no doubt,

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor
And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what
beside!

Clugnet [to VALENCE]. You stare, young
sir, and threaten! Let me say,

That at your age, when first I came to
court,

I was not much above a gentleman;

While now . . .

Valence. — You are Head-Lackey?

With your office

I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers [to CLUGNET]. Let him talk!

Fidelity, disinterestedness,

Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever

Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind

At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Courtier. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out.

2nd Courtier. Let Gaucelme speak first!

3rd Courtier. Better I began

10 About the state of Juliers: should one say All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Courtier. — Or rather,

All's prostrate and imploring him?

5th Courtier. That's best

Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Courtier [to VALENCE]. Sir — sir — If you'll but lend that paper — trust it me, I'll warrant . . .

5th Courtier. Softly, sir — the Marshal's duty!

Clugnet. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first

By virtue of his patent?

Gaucelme. Patents? — Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again!

One word composes the whole controversy:

20 We're simply now — the Prince's!

The Others. Ay — the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

SABYNE. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!

Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?

She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?

Valence [starting from his reverie]. Most gratefully I follow to her feet.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

SCENE. — *The Vestibule.*

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Berthold. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.

[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne:

Better try Aix, though! —

Melchior. Please 't your Highness speak?

Berthold [as before]. Aix, Cologne Frankfort, — Milan; — Rome! —

Melchior. The Grave.

More weary seems your Highness, I remark,

Than sundry conquerors whose path I've 34 watched

Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.

I could well wish you, for your proper sake, Had met some shade of opposition here

— Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock, Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.

You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily: this will hurt your conquering.

Berthold. My next? Ay, as you say, my next and next!

Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,

This quiet entrance-morning: listen why! 40 Our little burgh, now, Juliers — 'tis indeed

One link, however insignificant,

Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,

— A link I must secure; but otherwise, You'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.

Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!

It happens now — this very nook — to be A place that once . . . not a long while

since, neither —

When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on

Of foreign courts, and bore my claims 50 about,

Discarded by one kinsman, and the other A poor priest merely, — then, I say, this

place

Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke —

Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.

My rights were far from judged as plain and sure

In those days as of late, I promise you:

And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here

Might e'en compound the matter, pity me, Be struck, say, with my chivalry and

grace

(I was a boy!) — bestow her hand at 60 length,

And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.

Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now. Harken: if ever I be Emperor,

Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Melchior. All this consoles a bookish man like me.

— And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,

Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court
yourself, —

Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed
the other, —

Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your
cause, —

Conquered a footing inch by painful
inch, —

And, after long years' struggle, pounced at
last

On her for prize, — the right life had been
lived,

And justice done to divers faculties

Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible

10 As you stood victor, then; whom now —
(your pardon!)

I am forced narrowly to search and see,
So are you hid by helps — this Pope, your
uncle —

Your cousin, the other King! You are a
mind, —

They, body: too much of mere legs-and-
arms

Obstructs the mind so! Match these with
their like:

Match mind with mind!

Berthold. And where's your
mind to match?

They show me legs-and-arms to cope
withal!

I'd subjugate this city — where's its mind?
[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]

Melchior. Got out of sight when you
came troops and all!

20 And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-
blood:

A smug oeconomy of both, this first!

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]

Well done, gout, all considered! — I may
go?

Berthold. Help me receive them!

Melchior. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said —

At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince,
my friend,

Why do you let your life slip thus? —
Meantime,

I have my little Juliers to achieve —

The understanding this tough Platonist,

Your holy unele disinterred, Amelius;

30 Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate — gain
my Duchy!

Berthold. And Empire, after that is
gained, will be —?

Melchior. To help me through your
uncle's comment, Prince! [*Goes.*]

Berthold. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines —
the scholar's fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this
life,

I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,

Of joys and griefs, — still there is such
degree

Mere largeness in a life is something,
sure, —

Enough to care about and struggle for, 40
In this world: for this world, the size of
things;

The sort of things, for that to come, no
doubt.

A great is better than a little aim:

And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth

And failed so, under that grey convent-
wall,

Was I more happy than I should be now
[*By this time, the Courtiers*

are ranged before him.]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
— Here comes the mind, it once had tasked
me sore

To baffle, but for my advantages!
All's best as 'tis: these scholars talk and 50
talk [Seats himself.]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to
Juliers! — to his heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clugnet. I, please your Highness, hav-
ing exercised

The function of Grand Chamberlain at
court,

With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berthold. I cannot greatly thank you,
gentlemen!

The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy
founded

On strictest justice — you concede it,
therefore,

I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protest they mean to see such claim en- 60
forced, —

You easily may offer to assist.
But there's a slight discretionary power

To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
Though late you use it. This is well to
say —

But could you not have said it months ago?
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon,
true —

'Tis flung me — I stoop down, and from
the ground

Pick it, with all you placid standers-by:
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,

Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you 70
say!

Guibert. (By Paul, the advocate our
doughty friend

Cuts the best figure!)

Gaucelme. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berthold. Loyalty? Yours? Oh — of
yourselves you speak!

I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my
claims

As if they never had been urged before,

As I began, so must I end, it seems.
The formal answer to the grave demand!
What says the lady?

Courtiers [one to another]. 1st *Courtier*.
Marshal! 2nd *Courtier*. Orator!

Guibert. A variation of our mistress' way!

Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet! — that, he waits!

1st *Courtier*. Your place!

2nd *Courtier*. Just now it was your own!

Guibert. The devil's!

Berthold [to *GUIBERT*]. Come forward, friend — you with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

10 In each decorum of the circumstance.

Give it me as she gave it — the petition, Demand, you style it! What's required, in brief?

What title's reservation, appanage's Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.

Gaucelme [to *GUIBERT*]. "Give it him as she gave it!"

Guibert. And why not?

[To *BERTHOLD*.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn

So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers. Stop — Idiot!

Guibert. — Inform you she denied your claim,

20 Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel, The blustering advocate!)

Berthold. By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

Guibert. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berthold [starting up]. Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought:

Since, as I live, I took you as you entered For just so many dearest friends of mine,

Fled from the sinking to the rising power — The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!

Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,

30 With every soldier left behind at Aix! Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!

What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince, he raves!

Guibert. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

Berthold. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?

— But why stand paltering with imbeciles? Let me see her, or . . .

Guibert. Her, without her leave, Shall no one see: she's Duchess yet!

Courtiers [footsteps without as they are disputing]. Good chance!

She's here — the Lady Colombe's self!

Berthold. 'Tis well!

[*Aside*.] Array a handful thus against my world?

Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind 40

To match one's mind with? Colombe!

Let us wait!

I failed so, under that grey convent wall! She comes.

Guibert. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!

[As the *Duchess* enters in conversation with *VALENCE*, *BERTHOLD* and the *Courtiers* fall back a little.

The *Duchess*. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,

My heart: the right is *Berthold's* and not mine.

Valence. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust

Your power to acquiesce so patiently As you believe, in such a dream-like change

Of fortune — change abrupt, profound, complete?

The *Duchess*. Ah, the first bitterness is 50 over now!

Bitter I may have felt it to confront The truth, and ascertain those natures' value

I had so counted on; that was a pang; But I did bear it, and the worst is over.

Let the Prince take them!

Valence. And take Juliers too? — Your people without crosses, wands and chains —

Only with hearts?

The *Duchess*. There I feel guilty, sir! I cannot give up what I never had:

For I ruled these, not them — these stood between.

Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by 60 stealth

Of *Berthold* from the first; more news and more:

Closer and closer swam the thundercloud, But I was safely housed with these, I knew.

At times when to the casement I would turn,

At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play, I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge —

Yet I was sure some one of all these friends Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight

Or plucked the flower: some one would interpose!

Valence. Not one thought on the 70 People — and Cleves there!

The *Duchess*. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,

Its shadow goes without so much regret: Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,

Answer Prince Berthold!

Valence. Then you acquiesce?

The Duchess. Remember over whom it was I ruled!

Guibert [stepping forward]. Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady!

The Duchess [to VALENCE]. I only have to turn, and I shall face

Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!

It is the daughter of a line of Dukes

This scornful insolent adventurer

Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!

I shall not answer him — dispute with him —

But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir! Sir — but a mere day's respite! Urge for me

— What I shall call to mind I should have urged

When time's gone by: 'twill all be mine, you urge!

A day — an hour — that I myself may lay My rule down! 'Tis too sudden — must not be!

The world's to hear of it! Once done — for ever!

How will it read, sir? How be sung about?

Prevent it!

Berthold [approaching]. Your frank indignation, lady,

Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem;

But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise

At this reception, — this defiance, rather.

And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice Your virtues could inspire a trusty few To make such gallant stand in your behalf,

I cannot but be sorry, for my own, Your friends should force me to retrace my steps;

Since I no longer am permitted speak

After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed

No less by courtesy than relationship —

Which I remember, if you once forgot.

But never must attack pass unrepelled.

Suffer that, through you, I demand of these,

Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

The Duchess. — Me

You say, you do not speak to —

Berthold. Of your subjects

I ask, then: whom do you accredit?

Where

Stand those should answer?

Valence [advancing]. The lady is alone.

Berthold. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?

Valence. I said she was alone —

Berthold. And weak, I said.

Valence. When is man strong until he feels alone?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure, 46
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape:
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre, —
each, a man!

That strength performed its work and passed its way:

You see our lady: there, the old shapes stand!

— A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor —

"Be helped their way, into their death put life

"And find advantage!" — so you counsel us.

But let strength feel alone, seek help 50
itself, —

And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts

The sea's breast out, — as, littered 'mid the waves

The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,

Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,

— And I am first her instinct fastens on.

And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,

The People will not have you; nor shall have!

It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last, — though that 60
does much,

And men and children, — ay, and women too,

Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay —

But, say you beat us, since such things have been,

And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot

Upon a steaming bloody plash — what then?

Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?

Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,

A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend —

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you 70
amplify,

A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood —

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-

queen,
For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,

We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.

— Our conqueror? Yes! — Our despot?
Yes! — Our Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

Berthold [who has been in thought].

Know your lady, also!

[*Very deferentially.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself

For having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be

Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,

[*Giving papers.*]

But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their
worth.

Here be our meeting-place; at night, its
time:

Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.*]

to 1st Courtier. So, this was their device!

2nd Courtier. No bad device!

3rd Courtier. You'd say they love each
other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

4th Courtier. — And moreover,

That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to
help

Their loves!

5th Courtier. Pray, Guibert, what is
next to do?

Guibert [*advancing*]. I laid my office at
the Duchess' foot —

Others. And I — and I — and I!

The Duchess. I took them, sirs.

Guibert [*apart to VALENCE*]. And now,
sir, I am simple knight again —

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront; whate'er your
birth, —

20 As things stand now, I recognise yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I
ffered

To fight you: will you be as generous

And now fight me?

Valence. Ask when my life is mine!

Guibert. ('Tis hers now!)

Clugnet [*apart to VALENCE, as GUIBERT turns from him*]. You, sir, have
insulted me

Grossly, — will grant me, too, the self-
same favour

You've granted him, just now, I make no
question?

30 Valence. I promise you, as him, sir.

Clugnet. " Do you so?

Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will Guibert!

The Duchess. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly; as*

VALENCE is about to follow —

Alone, sir — only with my heart: you stay!

Gaucelme. You hear that? Ah, light
breaks upon me! Cleves —

It was at Cleves some man harangued us
all —

With great effect, — so those who listened
said,

My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was
this he?

Guibert, — your strange, disinterested man!

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!

The modest worth you mean to patronise!

He cares about no Duchesses, not he —

His sole concern is with the wrongs of
Cleves!

What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you
at last?

Guibert. Would this hall's floor were a
mine's roof! I'd back

And in her very face . . .

Gaucelme. Apply the match

That fired the train, — and where would
you be, pray?

Guibert. With him!

Gaucelme. Stand, rather, safe
outside with me!

The mine's charged: shall I furnish you
the match

And place you properly? To the ante- 50
chamber!

Guibert. Can you?

Gaucelme. Try me! Your friend's
in fortune!

Guibert. Quick —

To the antechamber! He is pale with
bliss!

Gaucelme. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Guibert. To the antechamber!

[*The Courtiers retire.*]

The Duchess. Sir, could you know all
you have done for me

You were content! You spoke, and I am
saved.

Valence. Be not too sanguine, lady!

Ere you dream,

That transient flush of generosity

Fades off, perchance. The man, beside,
is gone, —

Him we might bend; but see, the papers
here —

Inalterably his requirement stays, 60
And cold hard words have we to deal with
now.

In that large eye there seemed a latent
pride,

To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed

From such a grace: however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form.

I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject

Himself upon occasion to — himself!

From rudeness, violence, you rest secure; 70
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The Duchess. You, — who have opened
a new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy — keeping it,
Or losing it — is that my sole world now?

Valence. Ill have I spoken if you thence
despise

Juliers; although the lowest, on true
grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on
false:

Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The Duchess. Nay, hear —
False, I will never — rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday — soul and
body,

Its hours have done on me the work of
years.

You hold the requisition: ponder it!
If I have right, my duty's plain: if he —
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
At night you meet the Prince; meet me
at eve!

Till when, farewell! This discomposes
you?

Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm:

So, prove the first step stable, all will
prove.

That first, I choose: [*Laying her hand on
his*] — the next to take, choose you!

[*She withdraws.*]

Valence [*after a pause*]. What drew
down this on me? — on me, dead once,
She thus bids live, — since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and
emprise,

Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them. Whither will this
reach, where end?

Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet
she's above —

So very far above me! All's too plain:
I served her when the others sank away,

And she rewards me as such souls re-
ward —

The changed voice, the suffusion of the
cheek,

The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
— Reward, that's little, in her generous
thought,

Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift: nor call it other than it is!
She loves me!

[*Looking at the Prince's papers.*] — Which
love, these, perchance, forbid.

Can I decide against myself — pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
— Cleves, help me! Teach me, — every
haggard face, —

To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV.

EVENING.

SCENE. — *An Antechamber.**Enter the Courtiers.*

Maufroy. Now, then, that we may speak
— how spring this mine?

Gaucelme. Is Guibert ready for its
match? He cools!

Nct so friend Valence with the Duchess
there!

"Stay, Valence! Are not you my better
self?"

And her cheek mantled —

Guibert. Well, she loves him, sir:
And more, — since you will have it I grow
cool, —

She's right: he's worth it.

Gaucelme. For his deeds to-day?
Say so!

Guibert. What should I say beside?

Gaucelme. Not this —
For friendship's sake leave this for me to
say —

That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat!
This plain unpractised suitor, who found
way

To the Duchess through the merest die's
turn-up

A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.

Guibert. Impossible!

Gaucelme. — Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which — taking not their stand
on facts

Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they
choose

Resort to, rather, — and which you and 60
we,

Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off!
The Duchess thus parades him as pre-
ferred,

Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an
end —

But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and
starts, —

The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or 70
forego —

She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
— He's just her puppet for the nonce!

You'll see, —

Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:

As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's will?

That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion

Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gauclme. I know that, well as you, — but does the Prince?

10 Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,

For Valence's ennoblement, — would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its due,

In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chancellor. Incontrovertibly.

Gauclme. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

Guibert. Enough!

I'm with you: selfishness is best again.

I thought of turning honest — what a dream!

20 Let's wake now!

Gauclme. Selfish, friend, you never were:

'Twas but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Guibert. — Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,

Apprise the Prince.

Gauclme. — The Prince, ere then dismissed

With thanks for playing his mock part so well?

Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night,

Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,

30 Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,

Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Guibert. — Our lady wedding Valence all the same

As if the penalty were undisclosed?
Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,

Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gauclme. The shame of it — the suddenness and shame!

Within her, the inclining heart — without,
A terrible array of witnesses —

And Valence by, to keep her to her word,

40 With Berthold's indignation or disgust!

We'll try it! — Not that we can venture much.

Her confidence we've lost for ever: Berthold's

Is all to gain.

Guibert. To-night, then, venture we! Yet — if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gauclme. Never in noble natures!

With the base ones, —

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,

And something grows and grows and gets to be

A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will

Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that: 50
But lop the lion's foot — and . . .

Guibert. To the Prince!

Gauclme [aside]. And come what will to the lion's foot, I pay you,

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.

[*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'Tis Valence breaks on us,

Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll hence —

And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first —

Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clugnet [to GAUCLME as they retire].

You have not smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Valence. So must it be! I have examined these

With scarce a palpitating heart — so calm, 60
Keeping her image almost wholly off,

Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims:

And the result is — all men would pronounce

And not I, only, the result to be —
Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right

To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,

Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,

To serve some devil's-purpose, — now 'tis 70
gained,

Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.

— Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?

Eject it from your heart, her home! — It stays!

Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!

— Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves, —

I need not your pale faces! This, reward
For service done to you? Too horrible!

I never served you: 'twas myself I served —

Say, served not — rather saved from punishment
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now.
My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step —
Cleves! If I breathe no prayer for it — if she,
Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself —
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter Prince BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir! I did not look for you
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the lady.

Berthold. So I hoped.

Valence. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
The frank disclosure of it first to you —
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
She will decide on.

Berthold. That I need not ask.

Valence. You need not: I have proved the lady's mind:

And, justice being to do, dare act for her.
Berthold. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Valence. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture

Bear herself bravely! She no whit depends

On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .

Berthold. A cottage — in what book
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
A throne! You have not been instructed,
sure,

To forestall my request?

Valence. 'Tis granted, sir!
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinised
Your claims . . .

Berthold. Ah — claims, you mean,
at first preferred?

I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest,
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Valence. You shall not need a stronger:
on the part

O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.
Propose!

Berthold. I offer her my hand.

Valence. Your hand?

Berthold. A Duke's, yourself say; and,
at no far time,
Something here whispers me — an Emperor's.

The lady's mind is noble: which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were — settled, let us amicably say!

Valence. Your hand!

Berthold. (He will fall down
and kiss it next!)

Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth
so cheap.

Enhance it, rather, — urge that blood is
blood —

The daughter of the Burgraves, Land-
graves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter! I shall scarce
gainsay.

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must
rule:

Like the imperial crown's great chryso-
prase,¹

They talk of — somewhat out of keeping
there,

And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Valence. You wed the Duchess?

Berthold. Cry you mercy, friend!
Will the match also influence fortunes so
here?

A natural solicitude enough.

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!

However high you take your present stand,

There's prospect of a higher still remove —

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,

And, when I have to choose a substitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you

Who need not give your mates a character.

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant

The grey smooth Chamberlain: he'd hesi- 60
tate

A doubt his lady could demean herself

So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!

I like your method better: feeling's play

Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Valence. I am to say, you love her?

Berthold. Say that too!

Love has no great concernment, thinks the
world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go prece-
dents

In Juliers' story — how use Juliers' Dukes?

I see you have them here in goodly row;

Yon must be Luitpold — ay, a stalwart 70
sire!

Say, I have been arrested suddenly

In my ambition's course, its rocky course,

By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it

And then proceed: so say and speedily

— (Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's
brazen self!)

Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I
think.

This is my claim, the others being with-
drawn,

And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,

¹ A variety of chalcedony.

Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell! [*He retires.*]

Valence [*after a pause*]. The heavens and earth stay as they were; my heart Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.

What falls away, then, if not faith in her? Was it my faith, that she could estimate Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,

Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong

'Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The Duchess. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away. All's over.

10 But you are sorry for me? Be not so! What I might have become, and never was, Regret with me! What I have merely been,

Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem Beginning now, in my new state, to be, Hope that I am! — for, once my rights proved void,

This heavy roof seems easy to exchange For the blue sky outside — my lot henceforth.

Valence. And what a lot is Berthold's! *The Duchess.* How of him?

Valence. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms;

20 Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,

Marching to fortune, not surprised by her. One great aim, like a guiding-star, above —

Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift

His manhood to the height that takes the prize;

A prize not near — lest overlooking earth He rashly spring to seize it — nor remote, So that he rest upon his path content:

But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,

And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,

30 He sees so much as, just evolving these, The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,

To due completion, will suffice this life, And lead him at his grandest to the grave. After this star, out of a night he springs; A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones He quits; so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,

Nor, as from each to each exultingly He passes, overleaps one grade of joy. This, for his own good: — with the world, each gift

40 Of God and man, — reality, tradition, Fancy and fact — so well environ him, That as a mystic panoply they serve —

Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind, And work his purpose out with half the world,

While he, their master, dexterously slipt From such encumbrance, is meantime employed

With his own prowess on the other half. Thus shall he prosper, every day's success Adding, to what is he, a solid strength — An æry might to what encircles him,

Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,

That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,

His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk

Become a comfort or a portent, how He trails his ermine take significance, — Till even his power shall cease to be most power,

And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare

Peril their earth its bravest, first and best, Its typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends —

The man of men, the spirit of all flesh, The fiery centre of an earthly world!

The Duchess. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise

Out of my own — that is, above my power Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch —

Valence. For you?

The Duchess. It was not I moved there, I think:

But one I could, — though constantly beside,

And aye approaching, — still keep distant from,

And so adore. 'Twas a man moved there.

Valence. Who?

The Duchess. I felt the spirit, never saw the face.

Valence. See it! 'Tis Berthold's! He enables you

To realise your vision.

The Duchess. Berthold?

Valence. Duke — Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

The Duchess. Generous and princely!

Valence. He is all of this. *The Duchess.* Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! No hand

Degrades me. *Valence.* You accept the proffered hand?

The Duchess. That he should love me!

Valence. "Loved" I did not say. Had that been — love might so incline the Prince

To the world's good, the world that's at his foot, —

I do not know, this moment, I should dare 8

Desire that you refused the world — and Cleves —

The sacrifice he asks,

The Duchess. Not love me, sir?

Valence. He scarce affirmed it.

The Duchess. May not deeds affirm?

Valence. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved —

Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks, —

Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance.

The Duchess. Is not this love?

Valence. So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully: All doubts are banished, that the world might have,

Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time, May call up of your heart's sincereness now.

To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule

"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams —
"Yet I abjured it." This, he does for you:

It is munificently much.

The Duchess. Still "much!"

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

Valence. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks

Had gone with love's presentment of a flower

To the beloved: because bold confidence, Open superiority, free pride —

Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:

Because where reason, even, finds no flaw, Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The Duchess. You reason, then, and doubt?

Valence. I love, and know.

The Duchess. You love? How strange!

I never cast a thought

On that. Just see our selfishness! You seemed

So much my own . . . I had no ground — and yet,

I never dreamed another might divide

My power with you, much less exceed it.

Valence. Lady,

I am yours wholly.

The Duchess. Oh, no, no, not mine!

'Tis not the same now, never more can be.

— Your first love, doubtless. Well, what's gone from me?

What have I lost in you?

Valence. My heart replies —

No loss there! So to Berthold back again:

This offer of his hand, he bids me make — its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The Duchess. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!

Valence. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.

The Duchess. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me,

I fancied them exclusively my own,

Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!

She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Valence. Most fair, beyond conception or belief.

The Duchess. Black eyes? — no matter!

Colombe, the world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed

The only woman: see how true they spoke!

One lived this while, who never saw your face,

Nor heard your voice — unless . . . Is she from Cleves?

Valence. Cleves knows her well.

The Duchess. Ah — just a fancy, now!

When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves, — I said,

— Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Valence. You thought of me?

The Duchess. Of whom else? Only

such great cause, I thought,

For such effect: see what true love can do!

Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask . . . And will not. This is idling: to our work!

Admit before the Prince, without reserve, My claims misgrounded; then may follow better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,

Was she in your mind?

Valence. All done was done for her

— To humble me!

The Duchess. She will be proud at least.

Valence. She?

The Duchess. When you tell her.

Valence. That will never be.

The Duchess. How — are there sweeter

things you hope to tell?

No, sir! You counselled me, — I counsel you

In the one point I — any woman — can. Your worth, the first thing; let her own

come next —

Say what you did through her, and she through you —

The praises of her beauty afterward!

Will you?

Valence. I dare not.

The Duchess. Dare not?

Valence. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The Duchess. You jest.

Valence. The lady is above me and away.

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,

And the great heart, combine to press me low —

But all the world calls rank divides us.

The Duchess. Rank!

Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares

Oracularly in another's case —

Sees the true value and the false, for them —

Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.

You called my court's love worthless — so it turned:

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth, And here you stickle for a piece or two!

10 First — has she seen you?

Valence. Yes.

The Duchess. She loves you, then.

Valence. One flash of hope burst; then succeeded night:

And all's at darkest now. Impossible!

The Duchess. We'll try: you are — so to speak — my subject yet?

Valence. As ever — to the death.

The Duchess. Obey me, then!

Valence. I must.

The Duchess. Approach her, and . . . no! first of all

Get more assurance. "My instructress," say,

"Was great, descended from a line of kings, And even fair" — (wait why I say this folly) —

20 "She said, of all men, none for eloquence, Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)

"The heart they sprung from, — none deserved like him

"Who saved her at her need: if she said this,

"What should not one I love, say?"

Valence. Heaven — this hope — Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire!

The Duchess. Say this! — nor think I bid you cast aside

One touch of all the awe and reverence; Nay, make her proud for once to heart's content

That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own!

Think you are all of this, — and, thinking it,

30 . . . (Obey!) —

Valence. I cannot choose.

The Duchess. Then, kneel to her!

[*Valence sinks on his knee.*]

I dream!

Valence. Have mercy! Yours, unto the death, —

I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die!

The Duchess. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?

Even with you as with the world? I know This morning's service was no vulgar deed Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,

Explains all done and infinitely more, So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.

Your service named its true source, — loyalty!

The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess 4 bids you,

Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

Valence [rising]. Rise? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from you!

I should rise — I who spoke for Cleves, can speak

For Man — yet tremble now, who stood firm then.

I laughed — for 'twas past tears — that Cleves should starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy, And no tongue daring trust as much to air:

Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?

Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me! On all I am, and have, and do — heart, 5 brain,

Body and soul, — this Valence and his gifts!

I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,

So that each, magnified a thousand times, Were nothing to you — but such nothingness,

Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop, A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?

What is my own desert? But should your love

Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me, —

Then — oh, that wild word "then!" — be just to love,

In generosity its attribute!

Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared — a stage

For trial of the question kept so long: Judge you — Is love or vanity the best?

You, solve it for the world's sake — you, speak first

What all will shout one day — you, vindicate

Our earth and be its angel! All is said. Lady, I offer nothing — I am yours:

But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,

And speak!

The Duchess. I have received the Prince's message:

Say, I prepare my answer!

Valence. Take me, Cleves! [He withdraws.]

The Duchess. Mournful — that nothing's what it calls itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty — mere love! And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?

I did ill to mistrust the world so soon: Already was this Berthold at my side.

The valley-level has its hawks no doubt;
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

SCENE. — *The Hall.**Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.*

Melchior. And here you wait the
matter's issue?

Berthold. Here.

Melchior. I don't regret I shut Amelius,
then.

But tell me, on this grand disclosure, —
how

Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

Berthold. Oh,

Turned out no better than the forehead-
less —

Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!

For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy

Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.

Perhaps I had a fancy, — but 'tis gone.

— Let her commence the unfriended inno-
cent

And carry wrongs about from court to
court?

No, truly! The least shake of fortune's
sand,

— My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes, —

And wondrously her claims would brighten
up;

Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,

O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,

Follow in plenty. No: 'tis the safe step.

The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:

Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Melchior. Which is to say, you, losing

heart already,

Elude the adventure.

Berthold. Not so — or, if so —

Why not confess at once that I advise

None of our kingly craft and guild just

now

To lay, one moment, down their privilege

With the notion they can any time at

pleasure

Retake it: that may turn out hazardous.

We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end

O' the night, with our great masque:

those favoured few

Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's

chance

Of the early evening, may retain their

place

And figure as they list till out of breath.

But it is growing late: and I observe

A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the door-
way

Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws
too near;

The ball must die off, shut itself up. We —
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine
in,

And sleep off headache on our frippery:
But friend the other, who cunningly stole
out,

And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.

I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.

Melchior. Yes — you evade the ad-
venture: and, beside,

Give yourself out for colder than you are.

King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes? 50

Don't they come in for somewhat of the
motive

With you too?

Berthold. Yes — no: I am past that
now.

Gone 'tis: I cannot shut my soul to fact.

Of course, I might by forethought and
contrivance

Reason myself into a rapture. Gone:

And something better come instead, no
doubt.

Melchior. So be it! Yet, all the same,
proceed my way,

Though to your ends; so shall you pros- 60
per best!

The lady, — to be won for selfish ends, —
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call

it,
Romantic way.

Berthold. Won easier?

Melchior. Will not she?

Berthold. There I profess humility
without bound:

Ill cannot speed — not I — the Emperor.

Melchior. And I should think the Em-
peror best waived,

From your description of her mood and
way.

You could look, if it pleased you, into
hearts;

But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own — you know that, for you study
it.

Berthold. Had you but seen the orator 70
her friend,

So bold and valuble an hour before,

Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!

Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed
the case!

Oh, I read hearts! 'Tis for my own be-
hoof,

I court her with my true worth: wait the
event!

I learned my final lesson on that head

When years ago, — my first and last essay —

Before the priest my uncle could by help
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt —
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his
thumb.

I am past illusion on that score.

Melchior.

Here comes

The lady —

Berthold. — And there you go. But
do not! Give me

Another chance to please you! Hear me
plead!

Melchior. You'll keep, then, to the
lover, to the man?

*Enter the DUCHESS — followed by ADOLF
and SABYNE and, after an interval, by
the Courtiers.*

10 *Berthold.* Good auspice to our meeting!

The Duchess. May it prove!

— And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

Berthold. (Ay, that's the point!) I may
be Emperor.

The Duchess. 'Tis not for my sake only,
I am proud

Of this you offer: I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly
spring

The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berthold. (Generous — still that!) You
underrate yourself.

You are, what I, to be complete, must
gain —

Find now, and may not find, another time.

20 While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative.

The Duchess. — Such, rather, would
some warrior-woman be —

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich
in friends —

One like yourself.

Berthold. Lady, I am myself,

And have all these: I want what's not
myself.

Nor has all these. Why give one hand
two swords?

Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will — I have a sword.

The Duchess. You love me, then?

Berthold. Your lineage I revere,

30 Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The Duchess. But, for love —

Berthold. A further love I do not under-
stand.

Our best course is to say these hideous
truths,

And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central

bed,

Black with the midnight bowels of the
earth,

That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's
throe,

A portent and a terror — soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow 4
hues

In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or
trees —

Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The Duchess. You cannot love, then?

Berthold. — Charlemagne, perhaps!

Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The Duchess. I have become so, very
recently.

It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood —

Asking the terms of my becoming yours? 50

Berthold. Let me not do myself injus-
tice, neither.

Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er

acquit,

It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,

Than wide profession of less scrupulous
men.

You will be Empress, once for all: with
me

The Pope disputes supremacy — you
stand,

And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.

The Duchess. That —

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again? 60

Berthold. The matter's not in my ar-
bitrament:

Now I have made my claims — which I
regret

Cede one, cede all.

The Duchess. This claim then, you
enforce?

Berthold. The world looks on.

The Duchess. And when must I decide?

Berthold. When, lady? Have I said
thus much so promptly

For nothing? — Poured out, with such
pains, at once

What I might else have suffered to ooze
forth

Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long —

For aught less than as prompt an answer,
too?

All's fairly told now: who can teach you 70
more?

The Duchess. I do not see him.

Berthold. I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly

Did time allow the better setting forth

The good of it, with what is not so good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well:

But as it is, the sum of both must serve.

I am already weary of this place:

My thoughts are next stage on to Rome.

Decide!

The Empire — or, — not even Juliers now!

Hail to the Empress — farewell to the Duchess!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Gaucelme. — "Farewell," Prince? when we break in at our risk —

Clugnet. Almost upon court-licence trespassing —

Gaucelme. — To point out how your claims are valid yet!

You know not, by the Duke her father's will,

The lady, if she weds beneath her rank, Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour —

So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right Succeed to Juliers.

Berthold. What insanity? —

Guibert. Sir, there's one Valence, the pale fiery man

You saw and heard this morning — thought, no doubt,

Was of considerable standing here:

I put it to your penetration, Prince,

If aught save love, the truest love for her Could make him serve the lady as he did!

He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves

— Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place

With danger, gets in by a miracle,

And for the first time meets the lady's face

So runs the story: is that credible?

For, first — no sooner in, than he's surprised

Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,

The lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The Duchess [aside]. And do such deeds spring up from love alone?

Guibert. But here occurs the question, does the lady

Love him again? I say, how else can she?

Can she forget how he stood singly forth

In her defence, dared outrage all of us,

Insult yourself — for what, save love's reward?

The Duchess [aside]. And is love then the sole reward of love?

Guibert. But, love him as she may and must — you ask,

Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!

Both, in their pride, point out the sole result;

Nought less would he accept nor she propose.

For each conjecture was she great enough

— Will be, for this.

Clugnet. Though, now that this

is known,

Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The Duchess. — What, sir, and wherefore? — since I am not sure

That all is any other than you say!

You take this Valence, hold him close to me,

Him with his actions: can I choose but look?

I am not sure, love trulier shows itself

Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,

Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.

Nor am I — (thus made look within myself,

Ere I had dared) — now that the look is

sure that I do not love him!

Guibert. Hear you, Prince?

Berthold. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean

Unless to prove with what alacrity

You give your lady's secrets to the world?

How much indebted, for discovering

That quality, you make me, will be found

When there's a keeper for my own to seek.

Courtiers. "Our lady?"

Berthold. — She assuredly remains.

The Duchess. Ah, Prince — and you too can be generous?

You could renounce your power, if this were so,

And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love

Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed

Him, even, in disinterestedness!

Berthold. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free.

Say, you have known a worthier than myself

In mind and heart, of happier form and face —

Others must have their birthright: I have gifts,

To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.

Against a hundred alien qualities, I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing:

Wed you the Empire?

The Duchess. And my heart away?

Berthold. When have I made pretension to your heart?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe;

With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts

Yon marble woman with the marble rcse,

Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,

In graceful, slight, silent security.

You will be proud of my world-wide career,

And I content in you the fair and good.

What were the use of planting a few seeds

The thankless climate never would mature —

Affections all repelled by circumstance?

Enough: to these no credit I attach, —

To what you own, find nothing to object.

Write simply on my requisition's face

What shall content my friends — that you admit,

As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,

Or never need admit them, as my wife —

10 And either way, all's ended!

The Duchess. Let all end!

Berthold. The requisition!

Guibert. — Valence holds, of course!

Berthold. Desire his presence!

[*ADOLF goes out.*]

Courtiers [to each other]. Out it all comes yet;

He'll have his word against the bargain yet;

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce.

One passionate appeal — upbraiding even,

May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*]

Berthold [to *MELCHIOR*]. The Empire

has its old success, my friend!

Melchior. You've had your way: before

the spokesman speaks,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,

20 And ever more be dumb! The Empire

wins?

To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Melchior [to the *Courtiers*]. Apart, my masters!

[*TO VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependant of the Prince's —

Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.

You are no higher, I find: in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest here,

Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact

Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them?

30 Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!

The Prince, then — an embroiled strange heap of news

This moment reaches him — if true or false,

All dignity forbids he should inquire

In person, or by worthier deputy;

Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:

And so, 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard

His offer to your lady?

Valence. Yes.

Melchior. — Conceive

Her joy thereat?

Valence. I cannot.

Melchior. No one can.

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Valence. [aside]. So!

No after-judgment — no first thought 4

revised —

Her first and last decision! — me, she

leaves,

Takes him; a simple heart is flung aside,

The ermine o'er a heartless breast em-

braced.

Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played

too oft!

Once, to surprise the angels — twice, that

fiends

Recording, might be proud they chose not

so

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach

the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their

strength, since men

Can have such chance yet fail so signally,

— But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven, 50

Welcome to earth — this taking death for

life —

This spurning love and kneeling to the

world —

Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

Melchior. Well, on this point, what but

an absurd rumour

Arises — these, its source — its subject,

you!

Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,

They say, your service claims the lady's

hand!

Of course, nor Prince nor lady can re-

spond:

Yet something must be said: for, were it

true

You made such claim, the Prince would . . . 60

Valence. Well, sir, — would?

Melchior. — Not only probably with-

draw his suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced

Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons

why!

But you'll excuse at present all save one, —

I think so. What we want is, your own

witness,

For, or against — her good, or yours:

decide!

Valence [aside]. Be it her good if she

accounts it so!

[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers,

to choose as she?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from

her

May reach, and dwell with, what she looks 70

upon?

Melchior [to the Prince]. Now to him,

you!

Berthold [to *VALENCE*]. My friend ac-

quaints you, sir,

The noise runs . . .

Valence.

— Prince, how fortunate are you,

Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,

All else you disregard! What else can be?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood — purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Melchior.

Ay, sir:

But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

Valence.

Then indeed,

What is it you can take?

Melchior.

Nay, ask the world!

Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind.

Valence.

When man perceives . . .
— Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

The Duchess. Speak for yourself!

Valence. May I? — no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by. Had I seen such an one,

As I loved her — weighing thoroughly
that word —

So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself! — if for another — well.

Berthold. Heroic truly! And your

sole reward, —

The secret pride in yielding up love's
right?

Valence. Who thought upon reward?

And yet how much

Comes after! — oh, what amplest recompense!

Is the knowledge of her, nought? the
memory, nought?

— Lady, should such an one have looked
on you,

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the
world

And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole

life's end —

Low passions hindered, baser cares kept
back,

All goodness cherished where you dwelt
— and dwell.

What would he have? He holds you —
you, both form

And mind, in his, — where self-love makes
such room

For love of you, he would not serve you
now

The vulgar way, — repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, to save the

old

Die blissfully — that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of

him —

Your good, by any means, himself un-
seen,

Away, forgotten! — He gives that life's
task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which I
return —

[Offers the requisition, which she takes.

Wishing your good.

The Duchess [having subscribed it]. And
opportune, sir —

Since at a birthday's close, like this of
mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,

Should gifts be thought of: yours comes
first by right.

Ask of me!

Berthold. He shall have whate'er he
asks,

For your sake and his own.

Valence [aside]. If I should ask —

The withered bunch of flowers she wears
— perhaps,

One last touch of her hand, I never more
shall see!

[After a pause, presenting
his paper to the Prince.

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs
of Cleves!

Berthold. I will, sir!

The Duchess [as VALENCE prepares to
retire]. — Nay, do out your duty,
first!

You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!

[VALENCE reads it.

I take him — give up Juliers and the
world.

This is my Birthday.

Melchior.

Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth

my books,

Sole man I think it pays the pains to
watch, —

Speak, for I know you through your Popes
and Kings!

Berthold [after a pause]. Lady, well re-
warded! Sir, as well deserved!

I could not imitate — I hardly envy —
I do admire you. All is for the best.

Too costly a flower were this, I see it
now,

To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither — any garish plume will do.

I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy —
You can so well afford to yield it me,

And I were left, without it, sadly lorn.
As it is — for me — if that will flatter

you,

A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . .

'faith, their life

Begins already! They're too occupied
To listen: and few words content me

best.

[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your
Duke, though! Who obey me here?

The Duchess. Adolf and Sabyne follow
us —

Guibert [starting from the Courtiers]. — And I?

Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you?
 Shall not I get some little duties up
 At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
 God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my

Birthday, too!

Berthold. You happy handful that
 remain with me

. . . That is, with Dietrich the black
 Barnabite

I shall leave over you — will earn your
 wages

Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
 Meantime, — go copy me the precedents
 Of every installation, proper styles
 And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes, —
 While I prepare to plod on my old
 way,

And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The Duchess [with a light joyous laugh
 as she turns from them]. Come, Va-

lence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Valence [as she falls into his arms].

— And thee!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES.

184- TO 185-.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
"That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army-leader Lannes
"Waver at yonder wall," —
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect —
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal's in the market-place,
"And you'll be there anon
"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed;
his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags
they had,
A year ago on this very day.

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and
cries.
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise
repels —
"But give me your sun from yonder
skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, 50
what else?"

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!
Nought man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

IV.

There's nobody on the house-tops now —
Just a palsied few at the windows set;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow. 60

V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead
bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down
dead.
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
"Me?" — God might question; now
instead,
'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so. 70

MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
 Looking as if she were alive. I call
 That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's
 hands
 Worked busily a day, and there she stands,
 Will't please you sit and look at her?
 I said.
 "Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
 Strangers like you that pictured coun-
 tenance,
 The depth and passion of its earnest
 glance,
 But to myself they turned (since none puts
 by
 70 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
 And seemed as they would ask me, if they
 durst,
 How such a glance came there; so, not
 the first
 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas
 not
 Her husband's presence only, called that
 spot
 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
 Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle
 laps
 "Over my lady's wrist too much," or
 "Paint
 "Must never hope to reproduce the faint
 "Half-flush that dies along her throat:"
 such stuff
 20 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause
 enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart — how shall I say? — too soon
 made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked what'er
 She looked on, and her looks went every-
 where.
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her
 breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the
 West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white
 mule
 She rode with round the terrace — all
 and each
 30 Would draw from her alike the approving
 speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men, ~~not~~
 good! but thanked.
 Somewhat I know not how — as if she
 ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to
 blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech — (which I have not) — to
 make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just
 this
 "Or that in you disgusts me; here you
 miss,
 "Or there exceed the mark" — and if
 she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 40 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made
 excuse,
 E'en then would be some stooping;
 and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no
 doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed
 without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I
 gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There
 she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll
 meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munifi-
 cence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune,
 though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze
 for me!

COUNT GISMOND.

AIX IN PROVENCE.

I.

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
 Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
 Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
 Chose time and place and company
 To suit it; when he struck at length
 My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
 All points to one, he must have schemed!
 That miserable morning saw
 Few half so happy as I seemed,
 While being dressed in queen's array
 To give our tourney prize away.

III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
 To please themselves; 'twas all their
 deed;
 God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
 If showing mine so caused to bleed

My cousins' hearts, they should have
dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head!

V.

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

VI.

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

VII.

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII.

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there,
'twill last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX.

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

X.

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
"About her! Let her shun the chaste,
"Or lay herself before their feet!
"Shall she whose body I embraced
"A long time, queen it in the day?
"For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI.

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture engine's wheel
Strength on it? No more says the soul. 54

XII.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his thro'—
Gave him the lie, then struck his
mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, 60
South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves, 70
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His feet . . . my memory
leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false
knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he cleve. 80

XVII.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said "Here die, but end thy breath
"In full confession, lest thou fleet
"From my first, to God's second death!
"Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have
lied
"To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
 — What safe my heart holds, though no
 word
 Could I repeat now, if I tasked
 My powers for ever, to a third
 Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
 Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung
 Against the world; and scarce I felt
 His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
 10 A little shifted in its belt:
 For he began to say the while
 How South our home lay many a mile.

XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
 We two walked forth to never more
 Return. My cousins have pursued
 Their life, untroubled as before
 I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
 God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear
 20 Great brow; tho' when his brother's
 black
 Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond
 here?
 And have you brought my tercel¹
 back?
 I just was telling Adela
 How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
 "Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
 30 O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
 And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well
 done;

"I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
 "Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

¹ A male of the peregrine falcon.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
 "Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
 "Might praise him, that great way, and
 die!"

Night passed, day shone,
 And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures away,
 A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
 "Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
 Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered in flesh, the empty cell,
 Lived there, and played the craftsman
 well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
 Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
 The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
 Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
 And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
 If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
 "There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so
 "New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
 "I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
 The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
 And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
 The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
 Stood the new Pope, Theocrite.

And all his past career
 Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
 Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
"And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
"Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it
dropped

"Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
"The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
"Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ
"Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

OF the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not
curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III.

Were the object less mean, would he
stand
At the swing of my hand!
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats."
o, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
till he couched there perdue;

I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilt:
Still he kept to his filth.

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press:
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself!
No; I could not but smile through my
chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
"Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
"Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
"The gravamen's in that!
"How the lion, who crouches to suit
"His back to my foot,
"Would admire that I stand in debate!
"But the small turns the great
"If it vexes you, - that is the thing!
"Toad or rat vex the king?
"Though I waste half my realm to unearth
"Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI.

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend"?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a
breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance com-
plete.

The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and
 prayed!
 —So, *I* was afraid!

MESMERISM.

I.

ALL I believed is true!
 I am able yet
 All I want, to get
 By a method as strange as new:
 Dare I trust the same to you?

II.

10 It at night, when doors are shut,
 And the wood-worm picks,
 And the death-watch ticks,
 And the bar has a flag of smut,
 And a cat's in the water-butt —

III.

And the socket floats and flares,
 And the house-beams groan,
 And a foot unknown
 Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
 And the locks slip unawares —

IV.

20 And the spider, to serve his ends,
 By a sudden thread,
 Arms and legs outspread,
 On the table's midst descends,
 Comes to find, God knows what
 friends! —

V.

'f since eve drew in, I say,
 I have sat and brought
 (So to speak) my thought
 To bear on the woman away,
 Till I felt my hair turn grey —

VI.

30 Till I seemed to have and hold,
 In the vacancy
 'Twixt the wall and me,
 From the hair-plait's chestnut gold
 To the foot in its muslin fold —

VII.

Have and hold, then and there,
 Her, from head to foot,
 Breathing and mute,
 Passive and yet aware,
 In the grasp of my steady stare —

VIII.

40 Hold and have, there and then,
 All her body and soul

That completes my whole,
 All that women add to men,
 In the clutch of my steady ken —

IX.

Having and holding, till
 I imprint her fast
 On the void at last
 As the sun does whom he will
 By the calotypist's skill —

X.

Then, — if my heart's strength serve,
 And through all and each
 Of the veils I reach
 To her soul and never swerve,
 Knitting an iron nerve —

XI.

Command her soul to advance
 And inform the shape
 Which has made escape
 And before my countenance
 Answers me glance for glance —

XII.

I, still with a gesture fit
 Of my hands that best
 Do my soul's behest,
 Pointing the power from it,
 While myself do steadfast sit —

XIII.

Steadfast and still the same
 On my object bent,
 While the hands give vent
 To my ardour and my aim
 And break into very flame —

XIV.

Then I reach, I must believe,
 Not her soul in vain,
 For to me again
 It reaches, and past retrieve
 Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV.

And must follow as I require,
 As befits a thrall,
 Bringing flesh and all,
 Essence and earth-attire,
 To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI.

Till the house called hers, not mine,
 With a growing weight
 Seems to suffocate
 If she break not its leaden line
 And escape from its close confine.

XVII.

Out of doors into the night!
 On to the maze
 Of the wild wood-ways,
 Not turning to left nor right
 From the pathway, blind with sight —

XVIII.

Making thro' rain and wind
 O'er the broken shrubs,
 'Twixt the stems and stubs,
 With a still, composed, strong mind,
 Nor a care for the world behind —

XIX.

Swifter and still more swift,
 As the crowding peace
 Doth to joy increase
 In the wide blind eyes uplift
 Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX.

While I — to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Nor a whit abate,
 And relax not a gesture due,
 As I see my belief come true.

XXI.

For, there! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip?
 Do my fingers dip
 In a flame which again they throw
 On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII.

Ha! was the hair so first?
 What, unfileted,
 Made alive, and spread
 Through the void with a rich outburst,
 Chestnut gold-interspersed?

XXIII.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
 See, on either side,
 Her two arms divide
 Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
 Take me, for I am thine!

XXIV.

"Now — now" — the door is heard!
 Hark, the stairs! and near —
 Nearer — and here —
 "Now!" and at call the third
 She enters without a word.

XXV.

On doth she march and on
 To the fancied shape;
 It is, past escape,

Herself, now: the dream is done
 And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI.

First I will pray. Do Thou
 That ownest the soul,
 Yet wilt grant control
 To another, nor disallow
 For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII.

I admonish me while I may,
 Not to squander guilt,
 Since require Thou wilt
 At my hand its price one day!
 What the price is, who can say?

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*.)

"HEIGHO!" yawned one day King Francis,
 "Distance all value enhances!
 "When a man's busy, why, leisure
 "Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
 "Faith, and at leisure once is he?
 "Straightway he wants to be busy. 6a
 "Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
 "Caught thinking war the true pastime.
 "Is there a reason in metre?
 "Give us your speech, master Peter!"
 I who, if mortal dare say so,
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
 "Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
 "Men are the merest Ixions" —
 Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's 70
 "— Heigho — go look at our lions!
 Such are the sorrowful chances
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
 Our company, Francis was leading,
 Increased by new followers tenfold:
 Before he arrived at the penfold;
 Lords, ladies, like clouds which bed...
 At sunset the western horizon.
 And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the fore- 80
 most

With the dame he professed to adore most.
 Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
 Here, and the horrible pitside;
 For the penfold surrounded a hollow
 Which led where the eye scarce dared
 follow,

And shelved to the chamber secluded
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
 The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
 As glossy and black as a scarab,¹
 And bade him make sport and at once stir 90
 Up and out of his den the old monster.

¹ A beetle.

They opened a hole in the wire-work
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,
 And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
 A pause, while the pit's mouth was
 troubled,
 The blackness and silence so utter,
 By the firework's slow sparkling and
 sputter;
 Then earth in a sudden contortion
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
 Such a brute! Were I friend Clement
 Marot

10 (Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
 And whose faculties move in no small mist
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)
 I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
 One's whole blood grew curdling and
 creepy

To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded

20 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 On space that might stand him in best
 stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the amaze-
 ment,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
 The lion at last was delivered?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!

30 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
 He was leagues in the desert already,
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain,
 To waylay the date-gathering negress:
 So guarded he entrance or egress.

"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we
 may well swear,

("No novice, we've won our spurs else-
 where

"And so can afford the confession.)

40 "We exercise wholesome discretion

"In keeping aloof from his threshold;

"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh
 hold,

"Their first would too pleasantly purloin

"The visitor's brisket or surloin:

"But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?

"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested:

50 The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
 For months past; he sat there pursuing
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a
 tarrier!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
 Walked straight to the glove, — while the
 lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sap-
 phire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, — 60
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,
 And full in the face of its owner
 Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
 "So should I!" — cried the King —

"'twas mere vanity,
 Not love, set that task to humanity!"
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
 From such a proved wolf in sheep's cloth-
 ing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression 70
 In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
 Amid the Court's scoffing and merri-
 ment, —

As if from no pleasing experiment
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
 So long as the process was needful, —
 As if she had tried in a crucible,
 To what "speeches like gold" were re-
 ducible,

And, finding the finest prove copper,
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
 To know what she had *not* to trust to, 80
 Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
 She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
 Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
 If she wished not the rash deed's recal-
 ment?

"For I" — so I spoke — "am a poet:
 "Human nature, — behoves that I know
 it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard

"Of the deed proved alone by the word:

"For my love — what De Lorge would not
 dare!

"With my scorn — what De Lorge could
 compare!

"And the endless descriptions of death

"He would brave when my lip formed a
 breath,

"I must reckon as braved, or, of course,

"Doubt his word — and moreover, per-
 force,

"For such gifts as no lady could spurn,

"Must offer my love in return.

"When I looked on your lion, it brought

"All the dangers at once to my thought,

"Encountered by all sorts of men,

"Before he was lodged in his den, —

"From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 "Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 "With no King and no Court to applaud,
 "By no shame, should he shrink, over-
 awed,
 "Yet to capture the creature made shift
 "That his rude boys might laugh at the
 gift,
 "— To the page who last leaped o'er the
 fence
 "Of the pit, on no greater pretence
 "Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
 "Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
 "So, wiser I judged it to make
 "One trial what 'death for my sake'
 "Really meant, while the power was yet
 mine,
 "Than to wait until time should define
 "Such a phrase not so simply as I,
 "Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
 "The blow a glove gives is but weak:
 "Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
 "But when the heart suffers a blow,
 "Will the pain pass so soon, do you
 know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping.
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping
 As close as he dared to the doorway.
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh
 His life than befits a plebeian;
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean —
 (I judge by a certain calm fervour
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve
 her)
 — He'd have scarce thought you did him
 the worst turn
 If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get,
 first earn!"
 And when, shortly after, she carried
 Her shame from the Court, and they
 married,
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men
 vie,
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
 And in short stood so plain a head taller
 That he wooed and won . . . how do you
 call her?
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel
 To the King's love, who loved her a week
 well.
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
 With the easy commission of stretching
 His legs in the service, and fetching
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat
 in, —
 But of course this adventure came pat in.

And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory, 50
 But the wife smiled — "His nerves are
 grown firmer:
 "Mine he brings now and utters no mur-
 mur."

Venienti occurrere morbo!
 With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES.

I've a Friend, over the sea;
 I like him, but he loves me.
 It all grew out of the books I write;
 They find such favour in his sight
 That he slaughters you with savage looks
 Because you don't admire my books. 60
 He does himself though, — and if some
 vein

Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
 Round should I just turn quietly,
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
 Till I found him, come from his foreign
 land

To be my nurse in this poor place,
 And make my broth and wash my face
 And light my fire and, all the while,
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile 70
 That I told him "Better have kept away
 "Than come and kill me, night and day,
 "With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
 "The creaking of his clumsy boots."
 I am as sure that this he would do,
 As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
 And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
 — Yes, rather would see him than not see,
 If lifting a hand could seat him there
 Before me in the empty chair 80
 To night, when my head aches indeed,
 And I can neither think nor read
 Nor make these purple fingers hold
 The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady — there he wakes,
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
 Within me, at her name, to pray
 Fate send some creature in the way
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
 Upthrust and outward-borne, 90
 So I might prove myself that sea
 Of passion which I needs must be!
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies
 quaint
 And my style infirm and its figures faint,
 All the critics say, and more blame yet,
 And not one angry word you get.
 But, please you, wonder I would put
 My cheek beneath that lady's foot
 Rather than trample under mine
 The laurels of the Florentine, 100
 And you shall see how the devil spends

A fire God gave for other ends!
 I tell you, I stride up and down
 'This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
 And feasted with love's perfect feast,
 'To think I kill for her, at least,
 Body and soul and peace and fame,
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,

So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
 Filled full, eaten out and in
 10 With the face of her, the eyes of her,
 The lips, the little chin, the stir
 Of shadow round her mouth; and she
 I'll tell you, — calmly would decree
 That I should roast at a slow fire,
 If that would compass her desire
 And make her one whom they invite
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven: there must be hell;
 Meantime, there is our earth here — well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

20 THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have
 plucked

The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
 30 How long it seems since Charles was
 lost!

Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay
 With signal fires; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end,

40 And much beside, two days; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring
 Provisions packed on mules, a string
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
 These I let pass in jingling line,
 50 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew. When these had passed,
 I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance: she did not start,
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,

One instant rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground.
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt; 60
 She picked my glove up while she stripped
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that; my glove lay in her breast.
 Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
 Rested the hopes of Italy.
 I had devised a certain tale 70
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
 Persuade a peasant of its truth;
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
 And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 Our Italy's own attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and stood, 80
 Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the worm —
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,
 "I am that man upon whose head
 "They fix the price, because I hate
 "The Austrians over us: the State
 "Will give you gold — oh, gold so much! —
 "If you betray me to their clutch,
 "And be your death, for aught I know,
 "If once they find you saved their foe.
 "Now, you must bring me food and drink, 90
 "And also paper, pen and ink,
 "And carry safe what I shall write
 "To Padua, which you'll reach at night
 "Before the duomo shuts; go in,
 "And wait till Tenebræ begin;
 "Walk to the third confessional,
 "Between the pillar and the wall,
 "And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes
 peace?*
 "Say it a second time, then cease;
 "And if the voice inside returns, 100
 "From Christ and Freedom; what con-
 cerns
 "The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip
 "My letter where you placed your lip;
 "Then come back happy we have done
 "Our mother service — I, the son,
 "As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
 In the same place, with the same eyes:
 I was no surer of sun-rise
 Than of her coming. We conferred 110
 Of her own prospects, and I heard
 She had a lover — stout and tall,
 She said — then let her eyelids fall,
 "He could do much" — as if some doubt
 Entered her heart, — then, passing out,
 "She could not speak for others, who
 "Had other thoughts; herself she knew."

And so she brought me drink and food.
 After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me: she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head — "This faith was shown
 "To Italy, our mother; she
 "Uses my hand and blesses thee."
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning — much less wished for —
 aught

Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now con-
 vince.

My inmost heart I have a friend?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself — say, three —
 I know at least what one should be.
 I would grasp Metternich until
 I felt his red wet throat distil
 In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
 — Nor much for that am I perplexed
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart
 Under his new employers. Last
 — Ah, there, what should I wish? For
 fast

Do I grow old and out of strength.
 If I resolved to seek at length
 My father's house again, how scared
 They all would look, and unprepared!
 My brothers live in Austria's pay
 — Disowned me long ago, men say;
 And all my early mates who used
 To praise me so — perhaps induced
 More than one early step of mine —
 Are turning wise: while some opine
 "Freedom grows licence," some suspect
 "Haste breeds delay," and recollect
 They always said, such premature
 Beginnings never could endure!
 So, with a sullen "All's for best,"
 The land seems settling to its rest.
 I think then, I should wish to stand
 This evening in that dear, lost land,
 Over the sea the thousand miles,
 And know if yet that woman smiles
 With the calm smile; some little farm
 She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
 If I sat on the door-side bench,
 And, while her spindle made a trench
 Fantastically in the dust,
 Inquired of all her fortunes — just
 Her children's ages and their names,
 And what may be the husband's aims
 For each of them. I'd talk this out,
 And sit there, for an hour about,

Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing — how
 It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO.

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
 Sit here by my side,
 On my knees put up both little feet!
 I was sure, if I tried,
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirecco.
 Now, open your eyes,
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish
 In black from the skies,
 With telling my memories over
 As you tell your beads;
 All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
 — The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry
 Autumn
 Had net-worked with brown
 The white skin of each grape on the
 bunches,
 Marked like a quail's crown,
 Those creatures you make such account of,
 Whose heads, — speckled white
 Over brown like a great spider's back,
 As I told you last night, —
 Your mother bites off for her supper.
 Red-ripe as could be,
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
 In halves on the tree:
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-
 stone,
 Or in the thick dust
 On the path, or straight out of the rock-
 side,
 Wherever could thrust
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
 Its yellow face up,
 For the prize were great butterflies fight-
 ing,
 Some five for one cup.
 So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
 What change was in store,
 By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
 Which woke me before
 I could open my shutter, made fast
 With a bough and a stone,
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
 Sole lattice that's known.
 Quick and sharp rang the rings down the
 net-poles,
 While, busy beneath,
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
 The rain in their teeth.
 And out upon all the flat house-roofs
 Where split figs lay drying,

The girls took the frails under cover:

Nor use seemed in trying

To get out the boats and go fishing,

For, under the cliff,

Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.

No seeing our skiff

Arrive about noon from Amalfi,

— Our fisher arrive,

And pitch down his basket before us,

10 All trembling alive

With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;

You touch the strange lumps,

And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner

Of horns and of humps,

Which only the fisher looks grave at,

While round him like imps

Cling screaming the children as naked

And brown as his shrimps;

Himself too as bare to the middle

20 — You see round his neck

The string and its brass coin suspended,

That saves him from wreck.

But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,

So back, to a man,

Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards

Grape-harvest began.

In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,

Like blood the juice spins,

While your brother all bare-legged is dancing

30 Till breathless he grins

Dead-beaten in effort on effort

To keep the grapes under,

Since still when he seems all but master,

In pours the fresh plunder

From girls who keep coming and going

With basket on shoulder,

And eyes shut against the rain's driving;

Your girls that are older,

For under the hedges of alce,

40 And where, on its bed

Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple

Lies pulpy and red,

All the young ones are kneeling and filling

Their laps with the snails

Tempted out by this first rainy weather,

Your best of regales,

As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,

When, supping in state,

We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,

50 Three over one plate)

With lasagne so tempting to swallow

In slippery ropes,

And gourds fried in great purple slices,

That colour of popes.

Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you:

The rain-water slips

O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe

Which the wasp to your lips

Still follows with fretful persistence:

Nay, taste, while awake,

This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball

That peels, flake by flake,

Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;

Next, sip this weak wine

From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,

A leaf of the vine;

And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh

That leaves thro' its juice

The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.

Scirocco is loose!

70 Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives

Which, thick in one's track,

Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,

Tho' not yet half black!

How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,

The medlars let fall

Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees

Snap off, figs and all,

For here comes the whole of the tempest!

No refuge, but creep

80 Back again to my side and my shoulder

And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,

When all the vine-boughs

Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture

The mules and the cows?

Last eve, I rode over the mountains;

Your brother, my guide,

Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles

That offered, each side,

90 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious, —

Or strip from the sorbs

A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,

Those hairy gold orbs!

But my mule picked his sure sober path out,

Just stopping to neigh

When he recognised down in the valley

His mates on their way

With the faggots and barrels of water;

And soon we emerged

100 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;

And still as we urged

Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,

As up still we trudged

Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,

And place was e'en grudged

'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones

Like the loose broken teeth

Of some monster which climbed there to die

From the ocean beneath —

Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-wood

That clung to the path,

And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks¹ as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear
 berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
 Of pale seagreen leaves;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
 Still, foot after foot like a lady,
 Till, round after round,
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,
 And God's own profound
 Was above me, and round me the moun-
 tains,
 And under, the sea,
 And within me my heart to bear witness
 What was and shall be.
 Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
 No rampart excludes
 Your eye from the life to be lived
 In the blue solitudes.
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite move-
 ment!
 Still moving with you;
 For, ever some new head and breast of them
 Thrusts into view
 To observe the intruder; you see it
 If quickly you turn
 And, before they escape you surprise them.
 They grudge you should learn
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over
 And love (they pretend)
 — Cover beneath them, the flat sea-pine
 crouches,
 The wild fruit-trees bend,
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and
 shut:
 All is silent and grave:
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
 How fair! but a slave.
 So, I turned to the sea; and there slum-
 bered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
 No ages can sever
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them, — halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses —
 No farther to-day,
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the
 wave,
 Watches breast-high and steady
 From under the rock, her bold sister
 Swum halfway already.
 Fortū, shall we sail there together
 And see from the sides
 Quite new rocks show their faces, new
 haunts
 Where the siren abides?

¹ The mastic tree (resinous).

Shall we sail round and round them, close
 over
 The rocks, tho' unseen,
 That ruffle the grey glassy water
 To glorious green?
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
 Reach land and explore,
 On the largest, the strange square black
 turret
 With never a door,
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
 Then, stand there and hear
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
 What life is, so clear?
 — The secret they sang to Ulysses
 When, ages ago,
 He heard and he knew this life's secret
 I hear and I know. 70

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano;
 He strikes the great gloom
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
 In airy gold fume.
 All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
 Our tinker and smith,
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
 And down-squatted forthwith
 To his hammering, under the wall there; 80
 One eye keeps aloof
 The urchins that itch to be putting
 His jews'-harps to proof,
 While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
 Is watching how sleek
 Shines the hog, come to share in the wind-
 fall
 — Chew, abbot's own cheek!
 All is over. Wake up and come out now,
 And down let us go,
 And see the fine things got in order
 At church for the show 90
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
 To-morrow's the Feast
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
 Of Virgins the least,
 As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
 Which (all nature, no art)
 The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
 Was getting by heart.
 Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
 With red and blue papers; 100
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
 A-blaze with long tapers;
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
 Rigged glorious to hold
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
 And trumpeters bold,
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that's brisk
 For the feast's second course. 110
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
 Be carried in pomp
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
 The priests mean to stomp.

All round the glad church lie old bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
 Religiously popped;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
 And more poppers bang.
 At all events, come — to the garden
 As far as the wall;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

— “Such trifles!” you say?
 Forth, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise
 — If ’twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
 In black from the skies!

IN A GONDOLA.

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
 In this my singing.
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears
 part;
 The very night is clinging
 Closer to Venice’ streets to leave one space
 Above me, whence thy face
 May light my joyous heart to thee its
 dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
 My very words, as if each word
 Came from you of your own accord,
 In your own voice, in your own way:
 “This woman’s heart and soul and brain
 “Are mine as much as this gold chain
 “She bids me wear; which” (say again)
 “I choose to make by cherishing
 “A precious thing, or choose to fling
 “Over the boat-side, ring by ring.”
 And yet once more say . . . no word more
 Since words are only words. Give o’er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
 Familiarly by my pet name,
 Which if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame —
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 ’Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
 What’s left but — all of me to take?
 I am the Three’s: prevent them, slake
 Your thirst! ’Tis said, the Arab sage,

In practising with gems, can loose
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce
 And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
 Leave them my ashes when thy use
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 What’s that poor Agnese doing
 Where they make the shutters fast?
 Grey Zanobi’s just a-wooing
 To his couch the purchased bride:
 Past we glide!

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past!
 Why’s the Pucci Palace flaring
 Like a beacon to the blast?
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring
 If the dear host’s neck were wried:
 Past we glide!

She sings.

I.

The moth’s kiss, first!
 Kiss me as if you made believe
 You were not sure, this eve
 How my face, your flower, had pursed
 Its petals up; so, here and there
 You brush it, till I grow aware
 Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II.

The bee’s kiss, now!
 Kiss me as if you entered gay
 My heart at some noonday,
 A bud that dares not disallow
 The claim, so all is rendered up,
 And passively its shattered cup
 Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I.

What are we two?
 I am a Jew,
 And carry thee, farther than friends can
 pursue,
 To a feast of our tribe;
 Where they need thee to bribe
 The devil that blasts them unless he im-
 bite
 Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever!
 And now,
 As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II.

Say again, what we are?
 The sprite of a star,
 I lure thee above where the destinies bar

My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is
withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever!
And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve
you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I.

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the breast-side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,

Caught this way? Death's to fear from
flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water —
feel!
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me?
There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-
grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my
hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too
surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you —
To catch your lory¹ that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber
do?

— With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look; your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings

¹ A parrot.

Which dare not speak, now to itself
 Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
 Went in and out the chords, his wings
 Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
 As an angel may, between the maze
 Of midnight palace-pillars, on
 And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
 Through guilty glorious Babylon.
 And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
 Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
 As the dry limpet for the lymph
 Come with a tune he knows so well.
 And how your statues' hearts must swell!
 And how your pictures must descend
 To see each other, friend with friend!
 Oh, could you take them by surprise,
 You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
 Doing the quaintest courtesies
 To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
 And, deeper into her rock den,
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
 You'd find retreated from the ken
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser —
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,
 And is not, rather, gravely bent
 On seeing for himself what toys
 Are these, his progeny invent,
 What litter now the board employs
 Whereon he signed a document
 That got him murdered! Each enjoys
 Its night so well, you cannot break
 The sport up, so, indeed must make
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
 Is used to tie the jasmine back
 That overfloods my room with sweets,
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
 My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,
 The Three are watching: keep away!

II.

Your gondola — let Zorzi wreath
 A mesh of water-weeds about
 Its prow, as if he unaware
 Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
 That I may throw a paper cut
 As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
 Only one minute more to-night with me?
 Resume your past self of a month ago!
 Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
 The lady with the colder breast than snow.
 Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my
 hand
 More than I touch yours when I step to
 land,
 And say, "All thanks, Siora!" —
 Heart to heart

And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we
 part,
 Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou
 art!

He is surprised and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, sweet! — and best
 Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy
 breast.
 Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards!
 Care
 Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
 My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not
 scorn
 To death, because they never lived: but I
 Have lived indeed, and so — (yet one
 more kiss) — can die!

WARING.

[Mr. Alfred Domett, C.M.G., author of
 "Ranolf and Amohia," full of descriptions
 of New Zealand scenery.]

I.

I.

WHAT'S become of Waring
 Since he gave us all the slip,
 Chose land-travel or seafaring,
 Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
 Rather than pace up and down
 Any longer London town?

II.

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
 Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
 On the night he thus took ship
 Or started landward? — little caring
 For us, it seems, who supped together
 (Friends of his too, I remember)
 And walked home thro' the merry weather,
 The snowiest in all December.
 I left his arm that night myself
 For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
 Who wrote the book there, on the shelf —
 How, fersooth, was I to know it
 If Waring meant to glide away
 Like a ghost at break of day?
 Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the devil:
 How he must have cursed our revel!
 Ay and many other meetings,
 Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
 As up and down he paced this London,
 With no work done, but great works un-
 done,
 Where scarce twenty knew his name.
 Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
 Written, bustled? Who's to blame
 If your silence kept unbroken?

"True, but there were sundry jottings,
 "Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blot-
 tings,
 "Certain first steps were achieved
 "Already which" — (is that your mean-
 ing?)
 "Had well borne out whoe'er believed
 "In more to come!" But who goes glean-
 ing
 Hedgeseide chance-glades, while full-
 sheaved
 Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'er-
 weening
 Pride alone, puts forth such claims
 O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
 I find out now I've lost him.
 I who cared not if I moved him,
 Who could so carelessly accost him,
 Henceforth never shall get free
 Of his ghostly company,
 His eyes that just a little wink
 As deep I go into the merit
 Of this and that distinguished spirit —
 His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
 As long I dwell on some stupendous
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
 Demoniaco-seraphic
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm
 With his dragging weight of arm.
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,
 Through one's after-supper musings,
 Some lost lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavour
 And goodness unrepaid as ever;
 The face, accustomed to refusings,
 We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
 Telling aught but honest truth to?
 What a sin, had we centupled
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
 No! she heard in its completeness
 Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
 And truth at issue, we can't flatter!
 Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
 From damning us thro' such a sally;
 And so she glides, as down a valley,
 Taking up with her contempt,
 Past our reach; and, in the flowers
 Shut her unregarded hours.

V.

Oh, could I have him back once more,
 This Waring, but one half-day more!
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,
 So hungry for acknowledgment
 Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content?

I'd say, "to only have conceived,
 "Planned your great works, apart from
 progress,
 "Surpasses little works achieved!"
 I'd lie so, I should be believed.
 I'd make such havoc of the claims
 Of the day's distinguished names
 To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
 Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned
 child!
 Or as one feasts a creature rarely
 Captured here, unreconciled
 To capture; and completely gives
 Its pettish humours licence, barely
 Requiring that it lives.

VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
 The glory is departed!
 Travels Waring East, away?
 Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
 Reports a man upstart
 Somewhere as a god,
 Hordes grown European-hearted,
 Millions of the wild made tame
 On a sudden at his fame?
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
 Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
 With the demurest of footfalls
 Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
 With serpentine and sycnite,
 Steps, with five other Generals
 That simultaneously take snuff,
 For each to have pretext enough
 And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
 Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
 To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
 And leave the grand white neck no gash?
 Waring in Moscow, to those rough
 Cold northern natures born perhaps,
 Like the lambwhite maiden dear
 From the circle of mute kings
 Unable to repress the tear,
 Each as his sceptre down he flings,
 To Dian's sanc at Taurica,
 Where now a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten
 beach
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy
 lands
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
 strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious
 cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter!
 In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
 Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
 That we and Waring meet again
 Now, while he turns down that cool nar-
 row lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
 Egyptian granite.

All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's
slid

Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.

Or, best of all,
I love to think

The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink

10 Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.¹

Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers, —
"Give me my so-long promised son,
"Let Waring end what I begun!"

20 Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;

30 While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and
pure,

Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their
boon,

40 All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so —
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.

50 Oh Waring, what's to really be?

A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius — am I right? — shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!

Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names! — but 'tis, some-
how,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II.

I.

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II.

"We were sailing by Triest
"Where a day or two we harboured:
"A sunset was in the West,
"When, looking over the vessel's side,
"One of our company espied
"A sudden speck to larboard. 80
"And as a sea-duck flies and swims
"At once, so came the light craft up,
"With its sole lateen sail that trims
"And turns (the water round its rims
"Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
"And by us like a fish it curled,
"And drew itself up close beside,
"Its great sail on the instant furled,
"And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried, 90
"(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
"Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
"Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
"A pilot for you to Triest?
"Without one, look you ne'er so big,
"They'll never let you up the bay!
"We natives should know best."
"I turned, and 'just those fellows' way."
"Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore
thieves
"Are laughing at us in their sleeves."

III.

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back; 100
"And one, half-hidden by his side
"Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
"With great grass hat and kerchief black,
"Who looked up with his kingly throat,
"Said somewhat, while the other shook
"His hair back from his eyes to look
"Their longest at us; then the boat,
"I know not how, turned sharply round,
"Laying her whole side on the sea
"As a leaping fish does; from the lee
"Into the weather, cut somehow

¹ Surnamed da Caravaggio. A pupil of Raphael.

"Her sparkling path beneath our bow
 "And so went off, as with a bound,
 "Into the rosy and golden half
 "O' the sky, to overtake the sun
 "And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 "Its singing cave; yet I caught one
 "Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 "And neither time nor toil could mar
 "Those features: so I saw the last
 "Of Waring!" — You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar!
 Look East, where whole new thousands
 are!
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

I.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
 Bloomed fables — flowers on furze,
 The better the uncouth:
 Do roses stick like burrs?

II.

A beggar asked an alms
 One day at an abbey-door,
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
 The abbot replied, "We're poor!"

III.

"Poor, who had plenty once,
 "When gifts fell thick as rain:
 "But they give us nought, for the nonce,
 "And now should we give again?"

IV.

Then the beggar, "See your sins!
 "Of old, unless I err,
 "Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
 "Date and Dabitur.

V.

"While Date was in good case
 "Dabitur flourished too:
 "For Dabitur's lenten face
 "No wonder if Date rue.

VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?
 "Try and make plump the other!
 "When Date's penance is done,
 "Dabitur helps his brother.

VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"
 The Abbot hung his head.
 This beggar was perhaps
 An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN.

I.

So far as our story approaches the end,
 Which do you pity the most of us
 three? —
 My friend, or the mistress of my friend
 With her wanton eyes, or me?

II.

My friend was already too good to lose,
 And seemed in the way of improvement
 yet,
 When she crossed his path with her hunt-
 ing noose
 And over him drew her net.

III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils, 50
 A shame, said I, if she adds just him
 To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
 The hundredth for a whim!

IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,
 How easy to prove to him, I said,
 An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
 Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V.

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
 My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
 And round she turned for my noble sake, 60
 And gave me herself indeed.

VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
 The wren is he, with his maiden face.
 — You look away and your lip is curled?
 Patience, a moment's space!

VII.

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
 He eyes me as the basilisk:
 I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
 Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief: 70
 "Though I love her — that, he compre-
 hends —
 "One should master one's passions, (love,
 in chief)
 "And be loyal to one's friends!"

IX.

And she, — she lies in my hand as tame
 As a pear late basking over a wall;
 Just a touch to try and off it came;
 'Tis mine, — can I let it fall?

X.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst !
 Were it thrown in the road, would the
 case assist ?
 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
 When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI.

And I, — what I seem to my friend, you
 see :
 What I soon shall seem to his love, you
 guess :
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?
 No hero, I confess.

XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
 And matter enough to save one's own :
 Yet think of my friend, and the burning
 coals
 He played with for bits of stone !

XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;
 That the woman was light is very true :
 But suppose she says, — Never mind that
 youth !
 What wrong have I done to you ?

XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays,
 So far at least as I understand ;
 And, Robert Browning, you writer of
 plays,
 Here's a subject made to your hand !

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

I.

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
 Since now at length my fate I know,
 Since nothing all my love avails,
 Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
 Since this was written and needs must be —
 My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness !
 Take back the hope you gave, I claim
 Only a memory of the same,
 — And this beside, if you will not blame,
 Your leave for one more last ride with
 me.

II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
 Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
 When pity would be softening through,
 Fixed me a breathing-while or two
 With life or death in the balance :
 right !
 The blood replenished me again ;
 My last thought was at least not vain :

I and my mistress, side by side
 Shall be together, breathe and ride,
 So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end
 to-night ?

III.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
 All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
 By many benedictions — sun's
 And moon's and evening-star's at once —
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
 Conscious grew, your passion drew
 Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
 Down on you, near and yet more near,
 Till flesh must fade for heaven was here ! —
 Thus leant she and lingered — joy and
 fear !
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
 Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
 Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
 Past hopes already lay behind.
 What need to strive with a life awry ?
 Had I said that, had I done this,
 So might I gain, so might I miss.
 Might she have loved me ? just as well
 She might have hated, who can tell !
 Where had I been now if the worst befell ?
 And here we are riding, she and I.

V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?
 We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,
 Saw other regions, cities new,
 As the world rushed by on either side.
 I thought, — All labour, yet no less
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
 Look at the end of work, contrast
 The petty done, the undone vast,
 This present of theirs with the hopeful
 past !
 I hoped she would love me ; here we
 ride.

VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?
 What heart alike conceived and dared ?
 What act proved all its thought had been ?
 What will but felt the fleshly screen ?
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.
 There's many a crown for who can reach.
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
 A soldier's doing ! what atones ?
 They scratch his name on the abbey-stones.
 My riding is better, by their leave.

VII.

What does it all mean, poet ? Well,
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell

What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by
side.

'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII.

10 And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
"Put in music we know how fashions end!"
20 I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being — had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I desecrate such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
30 Earth being so good, would heaven seem
best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this
ride.

X.

And yet — she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
40 The instant made eternity, —
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY.

*written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the
Younger.*

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,

2 A

Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

50

II.

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks'
own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

60

III.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a
noddy;
"And as for our Corporation — shock-
ing
"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
"For dolts that can't or won't determine
"What's best to rid us of our vermin!
"You hope, because you're old and obese, 70
"To find in the furry civic robe ease?
"Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a
racking
"To find the remedy we're lacking,
"Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
"I wish I were a mile hence! 80
"It's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
"I'm sure my poor head aches again,
"I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
"Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's
that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister 90
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew muti-
nous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V.

"Come in!" — the Mayor cried, looking bigger:

And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
10 There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's
tone,

"Had walked this way from his painted
tombstone!"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table:

And, "Please your honours," said he,
"I'm able,

"By means of a secret charm, to draw

"All creatures living beneath the sun,

30 "That creep or swim or fly or run,

"After me so as you never saw!

"And I chiefly use my charm

"On creatures that do people harm,

"The mole and toad and newt and viper;

"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck

A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same
cheque;

And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;

30 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever
straying

As if impatient to be playing

Upon this pipe, as low it dangled

Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,

"In Tartary I freed the Cham,

"Last June, from his huge swarms of
gnats;

"I eased in Asia the Nizam

"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-
bats:

"And as for what your brain bewilders,

40 "If I can rid your town of rats

"Will you give me a thousand guilders?"

"One? fifty thousand!" — was the ex-
clamation

Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,

Smiling first a little smile,

As if he knew what magic slept

In his quiet pipe the while;

Then, like a musical adept,

To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,

And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled, 51
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rum-
bling;

And out of the houses the rats came
tumbling.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny
rats,

Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny
rats,

Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,

Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, 60

Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,

Families by tens and dozens,

Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —

Followed the Piper for their lives.

From street to street he piped advancing,

And step for step they followed dancing,

Until they came to the river Weser,

Wherein all plunged and perished!

— Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,

Swam across and lived to carry 70

(As he, the manuscript he cherished)

To Rat-land home his commentary:

Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the
pipe,

"I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,

"And putting apples, wondrous ripe,

"Into a cider-press's gripe:

"And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,

"And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,

"And a drawing the corks of train-oil-
flasks,

"And a breaking the hoops of butter- 80
casks:

"And it seemed as if a voice

("Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery

"Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!

"The world is grown to one vast drysal-
tery!

"So munch on, crunch on, take your nun-
cheon,

"Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!"

"And just as a bulky sugar punchoon,

"All ready staved, like a great sun shone

"Glorious scarce an inch before me,

"Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore 90
me!'

"— I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people

Ring the bells till they rocked the steeple.

"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long
poles,

"Poke out the nests and block up the holes!

"Consult with carpenters and builders,

"And leave in our town not even a trace

"Of the rats!" — when suddenly, up the
face

Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand
guilders!"

IX.

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked
blue;

So did the Corporation too.

For council dinners made rare havoc

With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave,
Hock;

And half the money would replenish

Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.

To pay this sum to a wandering fellow

10 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!

"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a know-
ing wink,

"Our business was done at the river's
brink;

"We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,

"And what's dead can't come to life, I
think.

"So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink

"From the duty of giving you something
for drink,

"And a matter of money to put in your
poke;

"But as for the guilders, what we spoke

"Of them, as you very well know, was in
joke.

20 "Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.

"A thousand guilders! Come, take
fifty!"

X.

The Piper's face fell, and he cried

"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!

"I've promised to visit by dinnertime

"Bagdat, and accept the prime

"Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich
in,

"For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,

"Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:

"With him I proved no bargain-driver,

30 "With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!

"And folks who put me in a passion

"May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I
brook

"Being worse treated than a Cook?

"Insulted by a lazy ribald

"With idle pipe and vesture piebald?

"You threaten us, fellow? Do your
worst,

"Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII.

Once more he stept into the street

And to his lips again

40 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight
cane;

And ere he blew three notes (such sweet

Soft notes as yet musician's cunning

Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a
bustling

Of merry crowds justling at pitching and
hustling,

Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes
clattering,

Little hands clapping and little tongues
chattering,

And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley
is scattering,

Out came the children running.

All the little boys and girls,

With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,

And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,

Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after

The wonderful music with shouting and
laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council
stood

As if they were changed into blocks of
wood,

Unable to move a step, or cry

To the children merrily skipping by,

— Could only follow with the eye

60 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.

But how the Mayor was on the rack,

And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,

As the Piper turned from the High Street

To where the Weser rolled its waters

Right in the way of their sons and daugh-
ters!

However he turned from South to West,

And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,

And after him the children pressed;

Great was the joy in every breast.

70 "He never can cross that mighty top!

"He's forced to let the piping drop,

"And we shall see our children stop!"

When, lo, as they reached the mountain-
side,

A wondrous portal opened wide,

As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;

And the Piper advanced and the children
followed,

And when all were in to the very last,

The door in the mountain-side shut fast.

80 Did I say, all? No! One was lame,

And could not dance the whole of the
way;

And in after years, if you would blame

His sadness, he was used to say, —

"It's dull in our town since my playmates
left!

"I can't forget that I'm bereft

"Of all the pleasant sights they see,

"Which the Piper also promised me.

"For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,

"Joining the town and just at hand,

"Where waters gushed and fruit-trees 90
grew

"And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 "And everything was strange and new;
 "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
 "And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
 "And honey-bees had lost their stings,
 "And horses were born with eagle's wings:
 "And just as I became assured
 "My lame foot would be speedily cured,
 "The music stopped and I stood still,
 20 "And found myself outside the hill,
 "Left alone against my will,
 "To go now limping as before,
 "And never hear of that country more!"

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate
 A text which says that heaven's gate
 Opes to the rich at as easy rate
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and
 South,

20 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
 If he'd only return the way he went,
 And bring the children behind him.
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
 And Piper and dancers were gone for
 ever,

They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly
 If, after the day of the month and year,
 30 These words did not as well appear,
 "And so long after what happened here
 "On the Twenty-second of July,
 "Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"

And the better in memory to fix
 The place of the children's last retreat,
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street —
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
 Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern

40 To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
 But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
 And on the great church-window painted
 The same, to make the world acquainted
 How their children were stolen away,
 And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe
 Of alien people who ascribe

50 The outlandish ways and dress
 On which their neighbours lay such stress,
 To their fathers and mothers having
 risen

Out of some subterranean prison
 Into which they were trepanned
 Long time ago in a mighty band
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
 But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
 Of scores out with all men — especial,
 pipers!
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats &
 or from mice,
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep
 our promise!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

I.

You'RE my friend:

I was the man the Duke spoke to;

I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke
 too;

So here's the tale from beginning to end,
 My friend!

II.

Ours is a great wild country:

If you climb to our castle's top,

I don't see where your eye can stop;

For when you've passed the cornfield 70
 country,

Where vineyards leave off, flocks are
 packed,

And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,

And cattle-tract to open-chase,

And open-chase to the very base

Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,

Round about, solemn and slow,

One by one, row after row,

Up and up the pine-trees go,

So, like black priests up, and so

Down the other side again 80

To another greater, wilder country,
 That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
 Branched through and through with many
 a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;

Look right, look left, look straight
 before, —

Beneath they mine, above they smelt,

Copper-ore and iron-ore,

And forge and furnace mould and melt,

And so on, more and ever more,

Till at the last, for a bounding belt, 90

Comes the salt sand hoar of the great
 sea shore,

— And the whole is our Duke's country.

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was —

(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)

In the castle where the other Duke was —

(When I was happy and young, not old!)

I in the kennel, he in the bower:

We are of like age to an hour.

My father was huntsman in that day;

Who has not heard my father say 100

That, when a boar was brought to bay.

Three times, four times out of five,
 With his huntspear he'd contrive
 To get the killing-place transfixed,
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
 And that's why the old Duke would rather
 He lost a salt-pit than my father,
 And loved to have him ever in call;
 That's why my father stood in the hall
 When the old Duke brought his infant out
 To show the people, and while they
 passed

The wondrous bantling round about,
 Was first to start at the outside blast
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
 Just a month after the babe was born.
 "And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
 "The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
 "Needs the Duke's self at his side:"
 The Duke looked down and seemed to
 wince,
 But he thought of wars o'er the world
 wide,

Castles a-fire, men on their march,
 The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
 And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
 The row of crests and shields and banners
 Of all achievements after all manners,
 And "ay," said the Duke with a surly
 pride.

The more was his comfort when he died
 At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
 With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
 In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
 Petticoated like a herald,

In a chamber next to an ante-room,
 Where he breathed the breath of page
 and groom,

What he called stink, and they, perfume:
 — They should have set him on red Berold
 Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
 They should have got his cheek fresh tan-
 nage

Such a day as to-day in the merry sun-
 shine!

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot
 merlin!

(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
 Oh for a noble falcon-lanner

To flap each broad wing like a banner,
 And turn in the wind, and dance like
 flame!)

Had they broached a white-beer cask from
 Berlin

— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
 Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
 A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
 Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
 And rosy with sweet, — we shall not quar-
 rel.

IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
 Was left with the infant in her clutches,
 She being the daughter of God knows who:

And now was the time to revisit her
 tribe.

Abroad and afar they went, the two,
 And let our people rail and gibe
 At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
 As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
 Till after long years we had our desire,
 And back came the Duke and his mother
 again.

v.

And he came back the pertest little ape
 That ever affronted human shape;
 Full of his travel, struck at himself.

You'd say, he despised our bluff old
 ways?

— Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
 Our rough North land was the Land of
 Lays,

The one good thing left in evil days;
 Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
 And only in wild nooks like ours

Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
 And see true castles, with proper towers,
 Young-hearted women, old-minded men, 7c
 And manners now as manners were then.

So, all that the old Dukes had been, with-
 out knowing it,
 This Duke would fain know he was, with-
 out being it;

'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy
 of his showing it,

Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of
 our seeing it,

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
 The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts
 of them torn-out:

And chief in the chase his neck he perilled

On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
 With blood for bone, all speed, no strength; 8c

— They should have set him on red Berold
 With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
 And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire!

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we
 heard:

And out of a convent, at the word,
 Came the lady, in time of spring.

— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!

That day, I know, with a dozen coats
 I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
 Fit for the chase of urochs or buffie 9c

In winter-time when you need to muffle.

But the Duke had a mind we should cut
 a figure,

And so we saw the lady arrive:
 My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!

She was the smallest lady alive,
 Made in a piece of nature's madness,
 Too small, almost, for the life and gladness

That over-filled her, as some hive
 Out of the bears' reach on the high trees

Is crowded with its safe merry bees: 10c

In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at
the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had
said it,

(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
10 Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed
tired

If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field
was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke:
And as down she sprung, the small foot
pointed

On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than
forward,

And welcomed her with his grandest
smile;
20 And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor-
ward;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind
sullies,

The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII.

In a day or two she was well again;
As who should say, "You labour in vain!"
30 "This is all a jest against God, who meant
"I should ever be, as I am, content
"And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I
will be."

So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's
wife,

(I had a wife, I know what I say)
40 Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at
most,

To meet his eye, with the other trophies,

Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be
seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute, 50
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infrac-
tion

Of rule — (but for after-sadness that
came)

To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the
old dame

Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or
blame:

They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving 60
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion
to strike him!

So found the Duke, and his mother like
him:

The lady hardly got a rebuff —
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded
applause,

And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin; 70
And the Duke perceived that she was
ailing,

And said in his heart, "'Tis done to spite
me,

"But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many
a year,

Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you
shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warn-
ing,

When the stag had to break with his foot,
of a morning,

A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a
trice,

Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold, 80
And another and another, and faster and
faster,

Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water
rolled;

Then it so chanced that the Duke our
master

Asked himself what were the pleasures in
season,

And found, since the calendar bade him
be hearty,

He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.

Always provided, old books showed the way of it!

What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?

We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:

Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated —

10 To encourage your dog, now, the proper-
est chirrup,

Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on
mounting your stirrup —

We of the household took thought and
debated.

Blessed was he whose back ached with the
jerk in

His sire was wont to do forest-work in;

Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"

And "ahs" while he tugged on his grand-
sire's trunk-hose;

What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like
the scallop,

And able to serve at sea for a shallop,

20 Loaded with lacquer and looped with crim-
son?

So that the deer now, to make a short
rhyme on't,

What with our Vencerers, Prickers and
Verderers,

Might hope for real hunters at length
and not murderers,

And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time
on't!

XL.

Now you must know that when the first
dizziness

Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-
boots subsided,

The Duke put this question, "The
Duke's part provided,

"Had not the Duchess some share in the
business?"

For out of the mouth of two or three wit-
nesses

30 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,

"When horns wind a mort and the deer
is at siege,

"Let the dame of the castle prick forth on
her jennet,

"And, with water to wash the hands of
her liege

"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,

40 "Let her preside at the disemboweling."

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,

And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;

And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,

And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise

If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing? 50

— I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in
dudgeon?

Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dig-
nified,

In what a pleasure she was to participate, —
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,

As if pressed by fatigue even he could not
dissipate,

And duly acknowledged the Duke's
forethought,

But spoke of her health, if her health were 60
worth aught,

Of the weight by day and the watch by
night,

And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting, —
Was conduct ever more affronting?

With all the ceremony settled —
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his eldest ewer,

And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink
eye-balled, —

No wonder if the Duke was nettled! 70
And when she persisted nevertheless, —
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's
chamber

A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in
waiting,

Stayed in call outside, what need of relat-
ing?

And since Jacynth was like a June rose,
why, a fervent

Adorer of Jacynth of course was your
servant;

And if she had the habit to peep through
the casement,

How could I keep at any vast distance? 80
And so, as I say, on the lady's persis-
tence,

The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,

And then, with a smile that partook of
the awful,

Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and
lawful;

And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like
instinct,

As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its
quince-tinct.

Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at
once!

What meant she? — Who was she? —
Her duty and station,

The wisdom of age and the folly of youth,
at once,

Its decent regard and its fitting rela-
tion —

In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell
free

And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue
of hers ran on!

10 Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face

Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere
grace

Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mus-
tered;

And here was the huntsman bidding
unkennel,

20 And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker
blustered,

With feather dank as a bough of wet
fennel;

For the court-yard walls were filled with
fog

You might have cut as an axe chops a log —
Like so much wool for colour and bulki-
ness;

And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulki-
ness,

Since, before breakfast, a man feels but
queasily,

And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.

And lo, as he looked around uneasily,

30 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it
asunder

This way and that from the valley under;
And, looking through the court-yard
arch,

Down in the valley, what should meet
him

But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet
him.

XIII.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;

North they go, South they go, trooping or
lonely,

And still, as they travel far and wide,

Catch they and keep now a trace here, a 4
trace there,

That puts you in mind of a place here, a
place there.

But with us, I believe they rise out of the
ground,

And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly em-
brown'd:

Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth — not a use to which they
don't turn it,

The ore that grows in the mountain's
womb,

Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn 50
it —

Whether they weld you, for instance, a
snaffle

With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within
wards;

Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve
inwards,

Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a
swivel

And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.

Then they cast bells like the shell of the
winkle

That keep a stout heart in the ram with
their tinkle;

But the sand — they pinch and pound it
like ctters;

Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and 60
potters!

Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall
appear,

As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;

And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,

Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which
dangle

Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear

waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white 70
daughters:

Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand

to.

And these made the troop, which our Duke
saw sally

Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,

Come out with the morning to greet our
riders.

And up they wound till they reached the
ditch,

Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the

group,

By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came
round,

She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last
time.

And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes

Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And then, as of old, at the end of the
humming

Her usual presents were forthcoming
— A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of
trebles,

(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine
pebbles,)

Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a
pipe-end, —

And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely
vouchsafe

A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt

For the purse of sleek pine-marten pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch
safe, —

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel mean-
ing —

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and
sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?

So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural
fur-suit)

He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his
gesture,

The life of the lady so flower-like and deli-
cate

With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned

From out of the throng, and while I drew
near

He told the crone — as I since have
reckoned

By the way he bent and spoke into her ear 50

With circumspection and mystery —
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude:

And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits
tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelligence
brightening,

As though she engaged with hearty
good-will

Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough
frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse 60

Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the
hernshaw,

He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,

To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion

And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere 70
curveter,

Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and
servitor,

And back I turned and bade the crone
follow.

And what makes me confident what's to be
told you

Had all along been of this crone's
devising,

Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold
you,

There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in
stature,

And her step kept pace with mine nor
flattered,

As if age had foregone its usurpature, 80

And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another na-
ture,

And the change reached too, whatever the
change meant,

Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,

Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:

And under her brow, like a snail's horn
newly

Come out as after the rain he paces, 90

Two unmistakeable eye-points duly

Live and aware looked out of their places.

So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,

And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV.

10 And now, what took place at the very first
of all,

I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly

Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly

As one of the boars my father would pin
you

'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
— Jacynth forgive me the comparison!

20 But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in these days a falcon eye,
'To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinnier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.

When, in a moment, my ear was
arrested

By — was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing

30 In the chamber? — and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen — the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent

On the lady's head and face intent:
40 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands
met,

And on these hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil

— Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
50 They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.

I said "Is it blessing, is it banning,
"Do they applaud you or burlesque you —

"Those hands and fingers with no flesh
on?"

But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,

At once I was stopped by the lady's
expression:

For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwink-
ing,

— Life's pure fire received without shrink-
ing,

Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving, 60

— Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving

Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the
white throat curving;

And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,

Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more con-
founded,

As still her cheeks burned and eyes
glistened,

As she listened and she listened: 70

When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,

And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,

Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and
dropped

From under the words it first had
propped,

And left them midway in the world:
Word took word as hand takes hand, 80

I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,

The Gipsy said: —

"And so at last we find my tribe.

"And so I set thee in the midst,

"And to one and all of them describe

"What thou saidst and what thou didst,

"Our long and terrible journey through,

"And all thou art ready to say and do

"In the trials that remain:

"I trace them the vein and the other vein 90

"That meet on thy brow and part again,

"Making our rapid mystic mark;

"And I bid my people prove and probe

"Each eye's profound and glorious globe

"Till they detect the kindred spark

"In those depths so dear and dark,

"Like the spots that snap and burst and
flee,

"Circling over the midnight sea.

"And on that round young cheek of thine

"I make them recognise the tinge, 100

"As when of the costly scarlet wine

"They drip so much as will impinge

"And spread in a thinnest scale afloat

"One thick gold drop from the olive's coat

"Over a silver plate whose sheen
 "Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
 "For so I prove thee, to one and all,
 "Fit, when my people ope their breast,
 "To see the sign, and hear the call,
 "And take the vow, and stand the test
 "Which adds one more child to the
 rest —
 "When the breast is bare and the arms are
 wide,
 "And the world is left outside.
 10 "For there is probation to decree,
 "And many and long must the trials be
 "Thou shalt victoriously endure,
 "If that brow is true and those eyes are
 sure;
 "Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
 "Of the prize he dug from its moun-
 tain-tomb —
 "Let once the vindicating ray
 "Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
 "And steel and fire have done their part
 "And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
 20 "So, trial after trial past,
 "Wilt thou fall at the very last
 "Breathless, half in trance
 "With the thrill of the great deliverance,
 "Into our arms for evermore
 "And thou shalt know, those arms once
 curled
 "About thee, what we knew before,
 "How love is the only good in the world.
 "Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 "Or brain devise, or hand approve!
 30 "Stand up, look below,
 "It is our life at thy feet we throw
 "To step with into light and joy;
 "Not a power of life but we employ
 "To satisfy thy nature's want;
 "Art thou the tree that props the plant,
 "Or the climbing plant that seeks the
 tree
 "Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
 "If any two creatures grew into one,
 "They would do more than the world has
 done:
 40 "Though each apart were never so weak,
 "Ye vainly through the world should seek
 "For the knowledge and the might
 "Which in such union grew their right:
 "So, to approach at least that end,
 "And blend, — as much as may be, blend
 "Thee with us or us with thee, —
 "As climbing plant or propping tree,
 "Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
 "Up and about, with blossoms and
 leaves?
 50 "Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-
 crown,
 "Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine
 cleaves,
 "Die on thy boughs and disappear
 "While not a leaf of thine is ere?
 "Or is the other fate in store,

"And art thou fitted to adore,
 "To give thy wondrous self away,
 "And take a stronger nature's sway?
 "I foresee and could foretell
 "Thy future portion, sure and well:
 "But those passionate eyes speak true, 60
 speak true,
 "Let them say what thou shalt do!
 "Only be sure thy daily life,
 "In its peace or in its strife,
 "Never shall be unobserved;
 "We pursue thy whole career,
 "And hope for it, or doubt, or fear, —
 "Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
 "We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 "With our blame, with our praise,
 "Our shame to feel, our pride to show, 70
 "Glad, angry — but indifferent, no!
 "Whether it be thy lot to go,
 "For the good of us all, where the haters
 meet
 "In the crowded city's horrible street;
 "Or thou step alone through the morass
 "Where never sound yet was
 "Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
 "For the air is still, and the water still,
 "When the blue breast of the dipping coot 80
 "Dives under, and all is mute.
 "So, at the last shall come old age,
 "Decrepit as befits that stage;
 "How else wouldst thou retire apart
 "With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
 "And gather all to the very least
 "Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
 "Let fall through eagerness to find
 "The crowning dainties yet behind?
 "Ponder on the entire past
 "Laid together thus at last, 90
 "When the twilight helps to fuse
 "The first fresh with the faded hues,
 "And the outline of the whole,
 "As round eve's shades their framework
 roll,
 "Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 "And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 "Of yet another morning breaks,
 "And like the hand which ends a dream,
 "Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 "Touches the flesh and the soul awakes, 100
 "Then —"
 Ay, then indeed something
 would happen!
 But what? For here her voice changed
 like a bird's;
 There grew more of the music and less
 of the words;
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
 To paper and put you down every syllable
 With those clever clerkly fingers
 All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
 To give you even this poor version
 Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with 110
 stammering

— More fault of those who had the
hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tin-
tacks!
But to return from this excursion,
Just, do you mark, when the song was
sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm com-
pletest,
There came, shall I say, a snap —
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely
banished,
40 And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring
made I
Down from the casement, round to the
portal,
Another minute and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than
mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind
centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by
palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
50 I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the
rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be
dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any com-
manding;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's
expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
30 To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend re-
quires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had
slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
40 We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The courtyard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married
her.

And, do you know, though it's easy de-
ceiving
Oncelf in such matters, I can't help be-
lieving
The lady had not forgotten it either, 54
And knew the poor devil so much beneath
her
Would have been only too glad for her
service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk
dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where
owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of
showing it:
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's
begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shift-
ing,
By a single rapid finger's lifting, 60
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused
me, —
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy
behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
— Something to the effect that I was in
readiness
Whenever God should please she needed
me, —
Then, do you know, her face looked down 70
on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her
bosom —
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood, — that a true heart so
may gain
Such a reward, — I should have gone
home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned
myself!
It was a little plait of hair 80
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake, —
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then, — and then, — to cut short, —
this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to
foster, —
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the
bridle,
And the palfrey bounded, — and so we
lost her.

XVI.

When the liquor's out why clink the canni-
kin?

I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the
mannikin,

And what was the pitch of his mother's
yellowness,

How she turned as a shark to snap the
spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving
Carib,

When she heard, what she called the flight
of the felcness

— But it seems such child's play,

What they said and did with the lady
away!

10 And to dance on, when we've lost the
music,

Always made me — and no doubt makes
you — sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked
so stern

As that sweet form disappeared through the
postern,

She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed

nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and went
on,

And my head's one that its spite was spent
on:

Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.

20 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,

The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:

But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to

wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled

fiery,
So, they made no search and small in-
quiry —

And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a
visit, I've

Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
30 But told them they're folks the Duke don't

want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the
frontier.

Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke
was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's
stead,

And took, in her place, the household's
head,

And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious

How I trench, more than needs, on the
nauseous,

I could favour you with sundry touches

Of the paint-smatches, with which the
Duchess

Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's 40
yellowness

(To get on faster) until at last her

Cheek grew to be one master-plaster

Of mucus and fucus from mere use of
ceruse:

In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII.

You're my friend —

What a thing friendship is, world without
end!

How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody breached you a glorious

runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, 50
sunlit,

Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —

Friendship may match with that monarch
of fluids;

Each supplies a dry brain, fills you its
ins-and-outs,

Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when
the thin sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and
guarantees

Age is not all made of stark sloth and
arrant ease.

I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest

of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you 60
before;

I always wanted to make a clean breast
of it:

And now it is made — why, my heart's
blood, that went trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy drib-
lets,

Is pumped up brisk now, through the main
ventricle,

And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do:

I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all,

And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit 70

His fame, a chain he bound his son
with;

Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get

done with:

So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-

adaptor,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,

Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll

kick up,

Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
 And then, when red doth the sword of our
 Duke rust,
 And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with
 a blue crust,
 Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
 For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth
 reposes,
 And our children all went the way of
 the roses.

It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
 One needs but little tackle to travel in;
 So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
 To And for a staff, what beats the javelin
 With which his boars my father pinned
 you?

And then, for a purpose you shall hear
 presently,
 Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump
 skinful,
 I shall go journeying, who but I, pleas-
 antly!

Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
 What's a man's age? He must hurry
 more, that's all;
 Cram in a day, what his youth took a
 year to hold:

When we mind labour, then only, we're
 too old —

What age had Methusalem when he begat
 Saul?

To And at last, as its haven some buffeted
 ship sees,
 (Come all the way from the north-parts
 with sperm oil)

I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
 And arrive one day at the land of the Gip-
 sies,

And find my lady, or hear the last news of
 her

From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
 His forehead chapleted green with wreathy
 hop,

Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.

And when my Cotnar begins to operate
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a
 proper rate,

And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each
 flaccid dent,

I shall drop in with — as if by accident —
 "You never knew, then, how it all ended,

"What fortune good or bad attended
 "The little lady your Queen befriended?"

— And when that's told me, what's remain-
 ing?

This world's too hard for my explaining.
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-
 old

To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French
 weak wine,

He also must be such a lady's scorner!
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:

Now up, now down, the world's one
 see-saw.

— So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good
 night;

And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
 blowing

Wakes me (unless priests cheat us lay-
 men)

To a world where will be no further throw-
 ing

Pearls before swine that can't value 50
 them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF
 LEARNING IN EUROPE.

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.

Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar
 thorpes

Each in its tether

Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
 Cared-for till cock-crow:

Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!

That's the appropriate country; there,
 man's thought,

Rarer, intenser,

Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and
 crop;

Seek we sepulture

On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;

No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit.

Thither our path lies; wind we up the
 heights:

Wait ye the warning?

Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He's for the morning.

Step to a tune, square chests, erect each
 head,

'Ware the beholders!

This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling
 thorpe and croft,

Safe from the weather!

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and
 throat,

Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should spring
take note

Winter would follow?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was
gone!

Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet
anon!

"My dance is finished?"

No, that's the world's way: (keep the
mountain-side,

Make for the city!)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with
pride

Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the
world

Bent on escaping:

"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou
keepest furled?

"Show me their shaping,

"Theirs who most studied man, the bard
and sage, —

"Give!" — So, he gowned him,

Straight got by heart that book to its last
page:

Learned, we found him.

Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like
lead,

Accents uncertain:

"Time to taste life," another would have
said,

"Up with the curtain!"

This man said rather, "Actual life comes
next?

"Patience a moment!

"Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed
text,

"Still there's the comment.

"Let me know all! Prate not of most or
least,

"Painful or easy!

"Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the
feast,

"Ay, nor feel queasy."

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to
give!

Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts —
Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire
from quartz,

Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the
market-place

Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace

(Hearten our chorus!)

That before living he'd learn how to
live —

No end to learning:

Earn the means first — God surely will
contrive

Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say, "But time es-
capes:

"Live now or never!"

He said, "What's time? Leave Now for
dogs and apes!

"Man has Forever."

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his
head:

Calculus racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.

"Now, master, take a little rest!" — not
he!

(Caution redoubled,

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure

Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on
God,

(He loves the burthen) —

God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's
success

Found, or earth's failure:

"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He
answered "Yes:

"Hence with life's pale lure!"

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

That, has the world here — should he need
the next,

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unper-
plexed

Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at
strife,

Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were
rife:

While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —
Properly based *Oun* —

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper
place:

Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:

This man decided not to Live but Know —
Bury this man there?

Here — here's his place, where meteors
shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! Let joy break with
the storm,

Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,
Leave him — still loftier than the world
suspects,

Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS.
A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT,
CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-
THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Vir-
gilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG
AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS
ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the
burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at
Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the re-
fraction from Flemish brain to brain, dur-
ing the course of a couple of centuries.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Tem-
plars when that order was suppressed in
1312.]

I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
Is the Lord we should look at, all at
once:

He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
Nor the shadow of turning, for the
nonce.

See him no other than as he is!
Give both the infinitudes their due —
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.

[Organ: *plagal-cadence*

As infinite a justice too.

II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,

What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod, 36
He sold it to Sultan Saladin:

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing
there,

Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[And wanteth there grace of lute or
clavicithern, ye shall say to con-
firm him who singeth —

We bring John now to be burned alive.

III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;

'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrels a-tilt,

Make a trench all round with the city 40
muck;

Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Faggots no few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no
more, —

For they mean he should roast in the
sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of
all.

IV.

Good sappy havins ¹ that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white
glow:

Then up they hoist me John in a chafe, 50
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the
torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo — who bids clap-to the torch.

V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so
bragged,

Is burning alive in Paris square!
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, which a band goes
round?

Or threat with his fist, since his arms are 60
spliced?

Or kick with his feet, now his legs are
bound?

— Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus
Christ.

[Here one crosseth himself.

VI.

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ — John had eaten and
drunk;

¹ Faggots.

To him the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)
Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
"I have roasted thee Turks, though men
roast me!
"See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
"Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou
me!"

VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
— Saith, it no more means what it pro-
claims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton
bird? —
For she too prattles of ugly names.
— Saith, he knoweth but one thing, —
what he knows?
That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some, honied of taste like your leman's
tongue:
Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to
come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked
thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked
thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays enclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

X.

So, as John called now, through the fire
amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his
life —

To the Person, he bought and sold again —
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife —
Feature by feature It took its place:
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking
bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face — 48
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the
dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO
ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SER-
MON IN ROME.

["Now was come about Holy-Cross Day,
and now must my lord preach his first
sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared
for in the merciful bowels of the Church,
that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her
conspicuous table here in Rome should be,
though but once yearly, cast to the famish-
ing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-
upon beneath the feet of the guests. And
a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of
the besotted blind restif and ready-to-
perish Hebrews! now maternally brought
— nay (for He saith, 'Compel them to
come in') haled, as it were, by the head
and hair, and against their obstinate hearts,
to partake of the heavenly grace. What
awakening, what striving with tears, what
working of a yeasty conscience! Nor
was my lord wanting to himself on so apt
an occasion; witness the abundance of
conversions which did incontinently reward
him: though not to my lord be altogether
the glory." — *Diary by the Bishop's
Secretary, 1600.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being
driven to church, was rather to this
effect: —

I.

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due
chime
Gives us the summons — 'tis sermon-time!

II.

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon — bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?

Fair play's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III.

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

IV.

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog!
20 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of
a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed
swine.

V.

Aaron's asleep — shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingum-
bob!
What's he at, quotha? reading his text!
20 Now you've his curtsy — and what
comes next?

VI.

See to our converts — you doomed black
dozen —
No stealing away — nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it
fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less
sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune — and fortune gets you; mind
that!

VII.

Give your first groan — compunction's at
work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a
Turk.
Lo, Micah, — the selfsame beard on chin
30 He was four times already converted in!
Here's a knife, clip quick — it's a sign of
grace —
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIII.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of
trades —
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX.

Groan all together now, whee — hee — 40
hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and
placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped
to the waist;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X.

It grew, when the hangman entered our
bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like
hounds:
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my
creed:
And it overflows when, to even the odd, 50
Men I helped to their sins help me to their
God.

XI.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our
flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sub-
lime, —
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh 60
and strange;
"Something is wrong: there needeth a
change.
"But what, or where? at the last or first?
"In one point only we sin, at worst.

XIII.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
"And again in his border see Israel set.
"When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
"The stranger seed shall be joined to
them:
"To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles
cleave.
"So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
"Shall carry and bring them to their place:
"In the land of the Lord shall I ad the
same,
"Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall
blame,
"When the slaves enslave, the oppressed
ones o'er
"The oppressor triumph for evermore?

XV.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
"Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
"Mid a faithless world, — at watch and ward,
"Till Christ at the end relieve our guard
"By His servant Moses the watch was set.
"Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI.

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
"By the starlight, naming a dubious name!
"And if, too heavy with sleep — too rash
"With fear — O Thou, if that martyr-gash
"Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
"And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

XVII.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
"But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
"Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
"Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
"Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed!
"Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

XVIII.

"We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
"At least we withstand Barabbas now!
"Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
"To have called these — Christians, had we dared!
"Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
"And Rome make amends for Calvary!

XIX.

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
"By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
"By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
"By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
"By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
"And the summons to Christian fellowship, —

XX.

"We boast our proof that at least the Jew
"Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
"Thy face took never so deep a shade
"But we fought them in it, God our aid!

"A trophy to bear, as we march, thy hand,
"South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[Pope Gregory XVI. abolished this bad business of the Sermon. — R. B.]

PROTUS.

[This poem is without warrant of history.]

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast, —
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
"Of empery beginning with a god;
"Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
"Queens by his cradle, proud and minis-
trant:
"And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire
"Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
"A fame that he was missing spread afar: 50
"The world from its four corners, rose in war,
"Till he was borne out on a balcony
"To pacify the world when it should see.
"The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
"Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
"And day by day more beautiful he grew
"In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
"While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the child,
"Became with old Greek sculpture reconciled.
"Already sages laboured to condense 60
"In easy tomes a life's experience:
"And artists took grave counsel to impart
"In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art —
"To make his graces prompt as blossoming
"Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
"Since well becomes it, whoso mounts the throne,
"For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
"And mortals love the letters of his name."

— Stop! Have you turned two pages?
Still the same.
New reign, same date, The scribe goes 70
on to say

How that same year, on such a month and day,

"John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
"A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand
reprieved

"The Empire from its fate the year before, —

"Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore

"The same for six years (during which the Huns

"Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons
"Put something in his liquor" — and so forth.

Then a new reign. Stay — "Take at its just worth"

10 (Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
"As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live

"And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age

"At some blind northern court; made, first a page,

"Then tutor to the children; last, of use
"About the hunting-stables. I deduce

"He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'

"Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
"Is extant yet. A Protus of the race

"Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace, —

20 "And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye,

Gross jaw and gripped lips do what granite can

To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,

And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

30 The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That self-same instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back — "Who is 40
she?"

— "A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —
Carved like the heart of a coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure¹ —
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —
The Duke grew straightway brave and 50
wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done, 60
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred, 70
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

¹ Neck and shoulder of a horse.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on
her
Till the final catafalk¹ repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

to "Freely I choose too," said the bride —
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart re-
plied —

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
"May his window serve as my loop of hell
"Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

to "Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul — but not to-
morrow" —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
"I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
"Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
"We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
to So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
"As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
"To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral,
"Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —
"A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

to "What if we break from the Arno bowers,
"And try if Petraja, cool and green,
"Cure last night's fault with this morn-
ing's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favour for me so mean!

¹ The stage or scaffolding for a coffin whilst
in the church.

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
"Each wind that comes from the Apennine
"Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
"If she quits her palace twice this year, 50
"To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
"Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself — "Which night shall
bring
"Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool —
"Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor
cool —
"For to-night the Envoy arrives from
France

"Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my 60
tool.

"I need thee still and might miss per-
chance.

"To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
"With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride — what should I do but ride?
"And passing her palace, if I list,
"May glance at its window — well be-
tide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit
kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow, 70
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth: 80
The rose would blow when the storm
passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's
dearth

By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain
worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she — she watched the square like a
book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book
was done,
And she turned from the picture at night
to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

10 So weeks grew months, years; gleam by
gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and
love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a
dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so
peaked, —

20 And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
"Who fashions the clay no love will
change,
"And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
"Arrest the remains of young and fair,
30 "And rivet them while the seasons range.

"Make me a face on the window there,
"Waiting as ever, mute the while,
"My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
"Dreary days which the dead must spend
"Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?
"I did no more while my heart was warm
"Than does that image, my pale-faced
friend.'

40 "Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
"The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
"And the blood that blues the inside
arm —

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
"The earthly gift to an end divine?
"A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlase,
Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky, 50
The passionate pale lady's face —

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless
stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by. —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest
wretch

In Florence, "Youth — my dream es-
capes!

"Will its record stay?" And he bade
them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
"Ere his body find the grave that gapes? 60

"John of Douay¹ shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
"That men may admire, when future suns
"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave
in bronze —

"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
"How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive 70
"To listen the while, and laugh in my
tomb

"At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his, 80
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to
this.

¹ Giovanni of Bologna, a sculptor.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
 "For their end was a crime." — Oh, a
 crime will do
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
 Sufficient to vindicate itself
 And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
 Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
 To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

10 The true has no value beyond the sham:
 As well the counter as coin, I submit,
 When your table's a hat, and your prize a
 dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
 Venture as warily, use the same skill,
 Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! — is my principle.
 Let a man contend to the uttermost
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

20 The counter our lovers staked was lost
 As surely as if it were lawful coin:
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is — the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
 Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
 You of the virtue (we issue join)
 How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

THE rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake:
 30 I listened with heart fit to break.
 When glided in Porphyria; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
 Which done, she rose, and from her form
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
 40 And called me. When no voice replied,
 She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder
 bare,
 And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
 Murmuring how she loved me — she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
 To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
 50 And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
 A sudden thought of one so pale
 For love of her, and all in vain:
 So, she was come through wind and rain.
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes
 Happy and proud; at last I knew
 Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
 64 While I debated what to do.
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good: I found
 A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
 Three times her little throat around,
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids: again
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain. 70
 And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck; her cheek once more
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
 I propped her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore
 Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
 80 And I, its love, am gained instead!
 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirred,
 And yet God has not said a word!

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME."

(See *Edgar's song in "LEAR."*)

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 90 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and
 scored
 Its edge, at one more victim gained
 thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his
 staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, en-
 snare
 All travellers who might find him posted
 there,
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-
 like laugh
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my
 epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquies-
 cingly

I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might
 be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide
 wandering,
 What with my search drawn out thro'
 years, my hope
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 to With that obstreperous joy success would
 bring,
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its
 scope.

V.

As when a sick man very near to death
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and
 end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each
 friend,
 And hears one bid the other go, draw
 breath
 Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he
 saith,
 "And the blow fallen no grieving can
 amend;")

VI.

While some discuss if near the other
 graves
 20 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
 With care about the banners, scarves and
 staves:
 And still the man hears all, and only craves
 He may not shame such tender love and
 stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been
 writ
 So many times among "The Band" —
 to wit,
 The knights who to the Dark Tower's
 search addressed
 Their steps — that just to fail as they,
 seemed best,
 30 And all the doubt was now — should I
 be fit?

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last
 view
 O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; grey plain 41
 all round:
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
 I might go on; nought else remained
 to do.

X.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
 Such starved ignoble nature; nothing
 throve:
 For flowers — as well expect a cedar
 grove!
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to
 awe,
 You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-
 trove.

XI.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In some strange sort, were the land's 54
 portion. "See
 "Or shut your eyes," said Nature
 peevishly,
 "It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
 "'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure
 this place,
 "Calcine its clods and set my prisoners
 free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chopped;
 the bents
 Were jealous else. What made those
 holes and rents
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised
 as to baulk
 All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must
 walk
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's 64
 intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the
 mud
 Which underneath looked kneaded up
 with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone
 a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the devil's
 stud!

XIV.

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red gaunt and colloped neck
 a-strain,
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty
 mane;

Seldom went such grotesqueness with such
woe;

I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

xv.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my
heart.

As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier
sights,

Er: fity I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the sol-
dier's art:

One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

xvi.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening
face

Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's dis-
grace!

Out went my heart's new fire and left it
cold.

xvii.

Giles then, the soul of honour — there he
stands

Frank as ten years ago when knighted
first.

What honest man should dare (he said)
he durst.

Good — but the scene shifts — faugh!
what hangman hands

Pin to his breast a parchment? His own
hands

Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
curst!

xviii.

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path
again!

No sound, no sight as far as eye could
strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat?

I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change
their train.

xix.

A sudden little river crossed my path

As unexpected as a serpent comes.

No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been
a bath

For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the
wrath

Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and
spumes.

xx.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;

Drenched willows flung them headlong
in a fit

Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the
wrong,

Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no
whit.

xxi.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, 4c
how I feared

To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to
seek

For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
— It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's
shriek.

xxii.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!

Who were the strugglers, what war did
they wage,

Whose savage trample thus could pad the
dank

Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank, 50
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

xxiii.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell
cirque.

What penned them there, with all the
plain to choose?

No foot-print leading to that horrid
mews,

None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves
the Turk

Pits for his pastime, Christians against
Jews.

xxiv.

And more than that — a furlong on —
why, there!

What bad use was that engine for, that
wheel,

Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to 60
reel

Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of
steel.

xxv.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once
a wood,

Next a marsh, it would seem, and now
mere earth

Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds
mirth,

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his
mood

Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark
black dearth.

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
 Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
 Broke into moss or substances like boils;
 Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
 Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
 Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end!
 Nought in the distance but the evening,
 nought
 To point my footstep further! At the
 thought,
 10 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-
 friend,
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing
 dragon-penned
 That brushed my cap — perchance the
 guide I sought.

XXVIII.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given
 place
 All round to mountains — with such
 name to grace
 Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in
 view.
 How thus they had surprised me, — solve
 it, you!
 How to get from them was no clearer
 case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
 20 Of mischief happened to me, God knows
 when —
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended,
 then,
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click
 As when a trap shuts — you're inside the
 den!

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place! those two hills on
 the right,

Crouched like two bulls locked horn in
 horn in fight;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain
 . . . Duncce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the sight! 34

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the
 fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counter-
 part
 In the whole world. The tempest's mock-
 ing elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers
 start.

XXXII.

Not see? because of night perhaps? —
 why, day
 Came back again for that! before it left,
 The dying sunset kindled through a
 cleft:
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay, 40
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
 "Now stab and end the creature — to
 the heft!"

XXXIII.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it
 tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my
 ears
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers, —
 How such a one was strong, and such was
 bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe
 of years.

XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-
 sides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame 50
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
 I saw them and I knew them all. And
 yet
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
 And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark
 Tower came.*"

LURIA.

A TRAGEDY.

1846.

I DEDICATE THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY
TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET;

"WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:"

IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED,

BY NOT THE LEAST WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN

A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

To WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

LONDON: 1846.

LURIA.

PERSONS.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.

HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.

PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's chief officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.

JACOPO (LAPO), his secretary.

TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.

DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine lady.

SCENE. — LURIA'S Camp between Florence and Pisa.

TIME, 14—.

ACT I.

MORNING.

BRACCIO, as dictating to his Secretary;
PUCCIO standing by.

Braccio [to PUCCIO]. Then, you join battle in an hour?

Puccio.

Not I;

Luria, the captain.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. "In an hour, the battle."

[To PUCCIO.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this loose digest,

And see if very much of your report

Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aright

How army stands with army?

Puccio [taking the paper]. All seems here:

— That Luria, seizing with our city's force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side, 10
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,

Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Braccio. So sure?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too!

Puccio. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. "The Signory hold Pisa in their hand."

Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir:

So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence!

Puccio [returning the paper]. All seems here; 20

Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report!

Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call

To save her, as he only could, no doubt;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be, —

Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you:
Each day's note you, her Commissary,

make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.

No youngster am I longer, to my cost;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her

choice 30

And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,

As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct,
faith,

Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done;
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of
praise,

'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the
trade
Subscribed with, "True, for once rash
counsel's best.

"This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful
race,

"This boy to whose untried sagacity,

10 "Raw valour, Florence trusts without
reserve

"The charge to save her, — justifies her
choice;

"In no point has this stranger failed his
friends.

"Now praise!" I say this, and it is not
here.

Braccio [to the Secretary]. Write, "Puc-
cio, superseded in the charge,

"By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
"And no reward our Signory can give

"Their champion but he'll back it cheer-
fully."

Aught more? Five minutes hence, both
messengers! [*Puccio goes.*]

*Braccio [after a pause, and while he
slowly tears the paper into shreds].*

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit
contempt

20 This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And, — once the brace of prizers fairly
matched,

Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as
good, —

Spit properly at what men term their
skill! —)

Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
With Pisa's strength diminished thus and
thus,

Such points of vantage in our hands and
such,

Lucca still off the stage, too, — all's as-
sured:

Luria must win this battle. Write the
Court,

That Luria's trial end and sentence pass!

20 *Secretary.* Patron, —

Braccio. Ay, Lapo?

Secretary. If you trip, I fall;

'Tis in self-interest I speak —

Braccio. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo! Nay!

When did I say pure love's impossible?

I make you daily write those red cheeks

thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns

it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,

Where all your old acquaintances may see:
You'd die for me, I should not be surprised.

Now then!

Secretary. Sir, look about and love
yourself!

Step after step, the Signory and you
Tread gay till this tremendous point's to
pass;

Which pass not, pass not, ere you ask
yourself, —

Bears the brain steadily such draughts of
fire,

Or too delicious may not prove the pride
Of this long secret trial you dared plan,

Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at

home,

Who think themselves your lords, such 50
slaves are they?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty, —

And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,

From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his

face,

Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Braccio. Then —

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people
vaunt,

We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger 60
past?

Secretary. Sir, no, no, no, — the danger,
and your spirit

At watch and ward? Where's danger on
your part,

With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-

force world?

If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all?

Braccio. Ah, you have thought that?

Secretary. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and

nights;

This Puccio comes; the Moor his other
friend,

Husain; they talk — that's all feigned 70
easily;

He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
Reads, orders, counsels: — but he rests

sometimes, —
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched

an hour
On the lynx-skins yonder; hold his bared

black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh

When his horse drops the forage from his
teeth

And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish
songs.

That man believes in Florence, as the
saint

Tied to the wheel believes in God.

Braccio. How strange!
You too have thought that!

Secretary. Do but you think too,
And all is saved! I only have to write,
"The man seemed false awhile, proves
true at last,

"Bury it" — so I write the Signory —
"Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
"Blot it from things or done or dreamed
about!

"So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
"With no suspicion what reverse was
near, —

10 "As if no meteoric finger hushed
"The doom-word just on the destroyer's
lip,

"Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall
straight."

Braccio [looks to the wall of the tent].
Did he draw that?

Secretary. With charcoal, when the
watch

Made the report at midnight; Lady
Domizia

Space of the unfinished Duomo, you re-
member;

That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,
— a sketch, —

And again where the cloak hangs, yonder
in the shadow.

Braccio. He loves that woman.

Secretary. She is sent the spy
20 Of Florence, — spics on you as you on
him:

Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write?

Braccio. I see —
A Moorish front, nor of such ill design!
Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive;
Man seeks his own good at the whole
world's cost.

What? If to lead our troops, stand forth
our chiefs,

And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace
return,

Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
30 Even for the best and bravest of ourselves —
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Should sink its point before the statish's
pen,

And the calm head replace the violent
hand,

Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own such falls the natural
end,

And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,

40 Declare, "The foreigner, one not my
child,

"Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach
height by height

"The glory, then descend into the shame;
"So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
"And punishment the easier task for me:"

— If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the
rest

Of common faith in Heaven or hope on 50
earth,

No past with us, no future, — such a
spirit

Shall hold the path from which our
stauncest broke,

Stand firm where every famed precursor
fell?

My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or
false:

— What is set down? Errors and over-
sights,

A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General, — all that, hour by 60
hour,

Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now;

Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence
posted

By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight —

She who remembering her whole House's
fall,

That nest of traitors strangled in the
birth,

Now labours to make Luria (poor device 70
As plain) the instrument of her revenge

— That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,

Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment
follows,

Proportionable rage at such a wrong —
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them
most,

Weigh with me less than least — as noth-
ing weigh.

Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go:
On what I know must be, yet, while I live, 80
Shall never be, because I live and know.

Brute-force shall not rule Florence! In-
tellect

May rule her, bad or good as chance sup-
plies:

But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up.

Till the good come — 'twas intellect that
ruled,

Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field

The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces

We lent it there to lure its grossness on;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsmen's-gear

(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,

When all was done they frightened nobody)
Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,

10 With our own warrant and allowance.
No!

The whole procedure is overcharged — its end

In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?

Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice! There, my

Lapo!
A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body:

Blot it out — and bid Luria's sentence come!

[LURIA, who, with DOMIZIA, has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advances.

Luria. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Braccio. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?

20 I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you: that you were now i' the thick

Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat . . .

Luria. No — in that paper, — it was in that paper

What you were saying!

Braccio. Oh — my day's dispatch! I censure you to Florence: will you see?

Luria. See your dispatch, your last, for the first time?

Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,

He would be forced to set about another, In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,

30 To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!

Do not send this!

Braccio. And wherefore?

Luria. These Lucchese

Are not arrived — they never will arrive!
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,

And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,

But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
Too look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody!

40 And I must break my battle up, send forth,

Surround on this side, hold in check on that.

Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home,

— Incompleteness, incompleteness!
Braccio. Ah, we scribes!

Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,

As a most happy fortune; both at once
Were formidable: singly faced, each falls.

Luria. So, no great battle for my Florentines!

No crowning deed, decisive and complete, 50
For all of them, the simple as the wise,

Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,

By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay — best speed, — half loss, at times,

— whole gain:
They want results: as if it were their fault!

And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,

Will not be able now to simply say
"Your servant has performed his task —

enough!"
"You ordered, he has executed: good! 60

"Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
"Congratulate your friends, till noon

strikes fierce,
"Then form bright groups beneath the

Duomo's shade!"
No, you will have to argue and explain,

Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive,

Lucchese!
Domizia. Well, you will triumph for

the past enough,
Whatever be the present chance; no service

Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits

Her saviour, will receive him fittingly. 70

Luria. Ah, Braccio, you know Florence!
Will she, think you,

Receive one . . . what means "fittingly receive"?

— Receive compatriots, doubtless — I am none:

And yet Domizia promises so much!
Braccio. Kind women still give men a

woman's prize.
I know not o'er which gate most boughs

will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or

blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of re-

wards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him

chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain's 80

place.
Luria. That, my reward? Florence

on my account

Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!

And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—

Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,

While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee. That was my calling, there was my true place!

I should have felt, in some one over me, Florence impersonate, my visible head, As I am over Puccio,—taking life

Directly from her eye! They give me you: But do you cross me, set me half to work?

I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once! Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Braccio. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:

Then, no arrival,—

Luria. Ah, noon comes too fast! I wonder, do you guess why I delay

Involuntarily the final blow As long as possible? Peace follows it!

Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads

Come out again, the penetrating eyes; As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art

You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile. 'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white

palace-front The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;

The walls are peopled by the painter's brush:

The statue to its niche ascends to dwell. The present noise and trouble have retired

And left the eternal past to rule once more; You speak its speech and read its records

plain, Greece lives with you, each Roman

breathes your friend:

30 But *Luria*—where will then be *Luria's* place?

Domizia. Highest in honour, for that past's own sake,

Of which his actions, sealing up the sum By saving all that went before from wreck,

Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Luria. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets,

Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,

So different, so new, so beautiful— Nor fear that you will tire to see parade

The club that slew the lion, now that crooks

o And shepherd-pipes come into use again? For very lone and silent seems my East

In its drear vastness: still it spreads, and still

No *Braccios*, no *Domizias* anywhere— Not ever more! Well, well, to-day is

ours!

Domisia [to *BRACCIO*]. Should he not have been one of us?

Luria. Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill Of coming into you, of changing thus,—

Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts The boundless unrest of the savage heart!

The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the 50 land,

Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;

Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile: Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles

away, In rapture of assent, subdued and still,

'Neath those strange banks, those unimagin'd skies.

Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever! Your placid heads still find rough hands

new work; Some minute's chance—there comes the

need of mine: And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.

Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser 60 *Braccio*!

You hold my strength; 'twere best dispose of it:

What you created, see that you find food for—

I shall be dangerous else! *Braccio.* How dangerous, sir!

Luria. There are so many ways, *Domizia* warns me,

And one with half the power that I possess,—Grows very formidable. Do you doubt?

Why, first, who holds the army . . . *Domizia.* While we talk,

Morn wears; we keep you from your proper place,

The field.

Luria. Nay, to the field I move no more; My part is done, and Puccio's may begin: 70

I cannot trench upon his province longer With any face.—You think yourselves

so safe? Why, see—in concert with *Tiburzio*,

now— One could . . .

Domizia. A trumpet! *Luria.* My *Lucchese* at last!

Arrived, as sure as *Florence* stands! Your leave! [*Springs out.*]

Domizia. How plainly is true greatness characterized

By such unconscious sport as *Luria's* here, Strength sharing least the secret of itself!

Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,

Such save the world which none but they 80 could save,

Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Braccio. Yes: and how worthy note, that these same great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness

And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course!
The statish finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him
The captain marshals troops born skilled
in war —

10 Statist and captain verily believe!
While we poor scribes . . . you catch
me thinking now,
That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able! To it, Lapo!

[DOMIZIA goes.]

This last worst all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me; the past was no child's
play:

It was a man beat Pisa, — not a child.
All's mere dissimulation — to remove
The fear, he best knows we should entertain.

20 The utmost danger was at hand. Is't
written?

Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
And speak your fullest on the other side.

Secretary. I noticed he was busily repairing

My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
And, while he spoke of Florence, turned
to it,

As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.
I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked
lately,

And presently will work, so, meantime,
plays:

30 Whence, more than ever I believe in him.
Braccio [after a pause]. The sword!

At best, the soldier, as he says,
In Florence — the black face, the barbarous
name,

For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men! To Florence with each
letter!

ACT II.

NOON.

Domizia. Well, Florence, shall I reach
thee, pierce thy heart

Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to
help —

Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,

40 And will thee dead: yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature, — hell and thee I
trust,

To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn
aside

A single step, for gratitude or shame, —
Grace but this Luria, — this wild mass of
rage

I have prepared to launch against thee
now, —

With other payment than thy noblest
found, —

Give his desert for once its due reward, — 50
And past thee would my sure destruction
roll.

But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,

It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and
truth:

Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then — I reach thee. Old and
trained, my sire

Could bow down on his quiet broken
heart,

Die awe-struck and submissive, when at
last

The strange blow came for the expected
wreath;

And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment 60
To exile, never to return, — they say,

Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed, —
how else

Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing
thus,

Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on
hour,

In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,

Was found, save pouring forth the impa- 70
tient blood

To show its colour whether false or no!
My brothers never had a friend like
me

Close in their need to watch the time, then
speak,

— Burst with a wakening laughter on
their dream,

Cry, "Florence was all falseness, so, false
here!"

And show them what a simple task re-
mained —

To leave dreams, rise, and punish in
God's name

The city wedded to the wickedness.
None stood by them as I by Luria stand.

So, when the stranger cheated of his due 80
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,

Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy
throat

For the first outrage, think who bore thy
last,

Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!

He comes — his friend — black faces in
the camp
Where moved those peerless brows and
eyes of old.

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Domizia. Well, and the movement — is
it as you hope?

'Tis Lucca?

Luria. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely!
Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Domizia. Whom I withdraw before;
tho' if I lingered

You could not wonder, for my time fleets
fast.

The overtaking time brings such reward!
And where will then be room for me?

Yet, praised,

Remember who was first to promise praise,
And envy those who also can perform!

[*Goes.*

Luria. This trumpet from the Pisans? —

Husain. In the camp;

A very noble presence — Braccio's visage
On Cuccio's body — calm and fixed and
good;

A man I seem as I had seen before:

Most like, it was some statue had the face.

Luria. Admit him! This will prove
the last delay.

Husain. Ay, friend, go on, and die
thou going on!

Thou heardest what the grave woman said
but now:

To-night rewards thee. That is well to
hear;

But stop not therefore: hear it, and go on!

Luria. Oh, their reward and triumph
and the rest

They round me in the ears with, all day
long?

All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
Well would it suit us, — their triumphal
arch

Or storied pillar, — thee and me, the Moors!
But gratitude in those Italian eyes —

That, we shall get?

Husain. It is too cold an air.

Our sun rose out of yonder mound of mist:
Where is he now? So, I trust none of
them.

Luria. Truly?

Husain. I doubt and fear. There
stands a wall

'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.

They use thee.

Luria. And I feel it, Husain! yes,
And care not — yes, an alien force like
mine

Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature; where its sole use
seems

To fight with and keep off an adverse force,

As alien, — which repelled, mine too
withdraws:

Inside, they know not what to do with me. 40
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the
worst.

Husain. What is the worst?

Luria. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not
speak —

Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, "The work rewards!"

"I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
"So may it prove! — meanwhile 'tis best
I go,

"Go carry safe my memories of you all
"To other scenes of action, newer lands." 50

Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me.

You think this hard to say?

Husain. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go!

This hating people, that hate each the
other,

And in one blandness to us Moors unite —
Locked each to each like slippery snakes,

I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing
tongue

And threatening tail, ne'er do each other
harm;

While any creature of a better blood, 60
They seem to fight for, while they circle
safe

And never touch it, — pines without a
wound,

Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
See thou, if Puccio come not safely out

Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn his
foe,

As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most! But thou, the
friend of all,

... Come out of them!

Luria. The Pisan trumpet now!

Husain. Breathe free — it is an enemy,
no friend! [*Goes.*

Luria. He keeps his instincts, no new 70
culture mars

Their perfect use in him; just so the brutes
Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,

When change is in the elements at work,
Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.

But here, — he takes the distant chariot
wheel

For thunder, festal flame for lightning's
flash,

The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence: I see!

Enter TIBURZIO.

Luria. Quick, sir, your message! I
but wait your message

To sound the charge. You bring no overture

For truce? I would not, for your General's sake,

You spoke of truce; a time to fight is come, And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps His honest soldier's name to beat me with, Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust!

Tiburzio. I am Tiburzio.

Luria. You? 'Tis

yes . . . Tiburzio!

You were the last to keep the ford i' the valley

From Puccio, when I threw in succours there

Why, I was on the heights — through the defile

Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost!

You wore an open skull-cap with a twist Of water-reeds — the plume being hewn away;

While I drove down my battle from the heights,

I saw with my own eyes!

Tiburzio. And you are Luria Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms

In error of the battle-signal's sense, Back safely to me at the critical time — One of a hundred deeds. I know you. Therefore

To none but you could I . . .

Luria. No truce, Tiburzio!

Tiburzio. Luria, you know the peril imminent

On Pisa, — that you have us in the toils, Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts The rage of her implacablest of foes From Pisa: if we fall to-day, she falls.

Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.

You have so plainly here the best of it,

That you must feel, brave soldier as you are, How dangerous we grow in this extreme,

How truly formidable by despair.

Still, probabilities should have their weight:

The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,

You win this battle. Wherefore say I this? To be well apprehended when I add,

This danger absolutely comes from you. Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .

Luria. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.

I can, and have perhaps obliged the State, Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tiburzio. Even so.

Were you the son of Florence, yet endued With all your present nobleness of soul,

No question, what I must communicate Would not detach you from her.

Luria. Me, detach?

Tiburzio. Time urges. You will ruin presently

Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake You think you know. I have from time to time

Made prize of certain secret missives sent From Braccio here, the Commissary, home:

And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.

Your trial occupies the Signory; They sit in judgment on your conduct now.

When men at home inquire into the acts Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .

Brief, they are Florentines! You, saving them,

Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.

Luria. Tiburzio!

Tiburzio. All the wonder is of course. I am not here to teach you, nor direct,

Only to loyally apprise — scarce that.

This is the latest letter, sealed and safe, 60

As it left here an hour ago. One way Of two thought free to Florence, I command.

The duplicate is on its road; but this, — Read it, and then I shall have more to say.

Luria. Florence!

Tiburzio. Now, were yourself a Florentine,

This letter, let it hold the worst it can, Would be no reason you should fall away.

The mother city is the mother still, And recognition of the children's service

Her own affair; reward — there's no 70 reward!

But you are bound by quite another tie. Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first

A foreigner, born friend to all alike, Should give himself to any special State

More than another, stand by Florence' side

Rather than Pisa; 'tis as fair a city You war against as that you fight for —

famed

As well as she in story, graced no less With noble heads and patriotic hearts:

Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause, 80 Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates Which take importance from familiar view,

Stand as the right and sole to be upheld. Therefore, should the preponderating

gift

Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,

Which made you hers, not Pisa's void the scale, —

Old ties dissolving, things resume their place

And all begins again. Break seal and read!

At least let Pisa offer for you now! And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice — 90

Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last light and its opportunity;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitter-
ness.

Luria. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa
now

As I for Florence . . . say my chance
were yours!

You read this letter, and you find . . .
no, no!

Too mad!

Tiburzio. I read the letter, find they
purpose

10 When I have crushed their foe, to crush
me: well?

Luria. You, being their captain, what
is it you do?

Tiburzio. Why, as it is, all cities are
alike;

As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,

As you, or more: my weak head, they will
say,

Prompted this last expedient, my faint
heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punish-
ment.

Another tenure of obedience, mine!

20 You are no son of Pisa's: break and read!

Luria. And act on what I read? What
act were fit?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for man-
kind,

— If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot
be!

You may be very sage, yet — all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone!
What would the world be worth? Whose
love be sure?

30 The world remains: you are deceived!

Tiburzio. Your hand!

I lead the vanguard. — If you fall, beside,
The better: I am left to speak! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect;
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in your
breast.

Luria. Tiburzio — I would see these
people once

And test them ere I answer finally!

At your arrival let the trumpet sound:

40 If mine return not then the wonted cry
It means that I believe — am Pisa's!

Tiburzio. Well!
[Goes.]

Luria. My heart will have it he speaks
true! My blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given
the salt

Secure, and, when my hour of watch was
done,

Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest
cheek.

Oh world, where all things pass and nought 58
abides,

Oh life, the long mutation — is it so?
Is it with life as with the body's change?

— Where, e'en tho' better follow, good
must pass,

Nor manhood's strength can mate with
boyhood's grace,

Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first gift dies away,

And though the new stays, never both at
once.

Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude 60

With which I turned to grow in these new
lights,

And learned to look with European eyes.
Yet it is better, this cold certain way,

Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,
Puccio's mouth,

Domizia's eyes reject the searcher: yes!
For on their calm sagacity I lean,

Their sense of right, deliberate choice of
good,

Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal
with me.

Yes, that is better — that is best of all!
Such faith stays when mere wild belief 70
would go.

Yes — when the desert creature's heart,
at fault

Amid the scattering tempest's pillared
sands,

Betrays its step into the pathless drift —
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast

By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck

subside,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found

again, —
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.

Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Braccio. Noon's at an end: no Lucca? 80
You must fight.

Luria. Do you remember ever, gentle
friends,

I am no Florentine?

Domizia. It is yourself

Who still are forcing us, importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should for-
get.

Luria. For loss! — for what I lose in being none!

No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,

But would remind you of the stranger's loss

In natural friends and advocates at home, Hereditary loves, even rivalships

With precedent for honour and reward.

Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,

The stranger's lot has special gain as well.

Do you forget there was my own far East

10 I might have given away myself to, once,

As now to Florence, and for such a gift,

Stood there like a descended deity?

There, worship waits us: what is it waits

here? *[Shows the letter.]*

See! Chance has put into my hand the

means

Of knowing what I earn, before I work.

Should I fight better, should I fight the

worse,

With payment palpably before me? See!

Here lies my whole reward! Best learn

it now

Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

20 *Braccio.* If you serve Florence as the

vulgar serve,

For swordsman's-pay alone, — break seal

and read!

In that case, you will find your full desert.

Luria. Give me my one last happy moment,

friends!

You need me now, and all the graciousness

This letter can contain will hardly balance

The after-feeling that you need no more.

This moment . . . oh, the East has use

with you!

Its sword still flashes — is not flung aside

With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!

30 How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines,

Captains of yours: for them, the ended

war

Is but a first step to the peace begun:

He who did well in war, just earns the

right

To begin doing well in peace, you know:

And certain my precursors, — would not

such

Look to themselves in such a chance as

mine,

Secure the ground they trod upon, per-

haps?

For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to

hear,

Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,

40 Treachery even. Say that one of you

Surmise this letter carried what might turn

To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice:

What would he do?

Domizia [hastily]. Thank God and

take revenge!

Hurl her own force against the city straight!

And, even at the moment when the foe Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO'S trumpet sounds in the distance.]

Luria. Ah, you Florentines!

So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt.

Why simple Moorish instinct bids me clench

The obligation you relieve me from,

Still deeper! *[To PUCCIO.]* Sound our an-

swer, I should say,

And thus: — *[tearing the paper.]* — The

battle! That solves every doubt.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, as making a report to JACOPO.

Puccio. And here, your captain must report the rest;

For, as I say, the main engagement over

And Luria's special part in it performed,

How could a subaltern like me expect

Leisure or leave to occupy the field

And glean what dropped from his wide

harvesting?

I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end

Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,

That Luria would detach me and prevent

60 The flying Pisans seeking what they

found,

Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.

But no, more honourable proved my post!

I had the august captive to escort

Safe to our camp; some other could pur-

sue,

Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was

mine —

Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!

He's in the tent there.

Jacopo. Is the substance down?

I write — "The vanguard beaten and both

wings

"In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner" —

70 And now, — "That they fell back and

formed again

"On Lucca's coming." Why then, after

all,

'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?

Puccio. Two operations where a sole

had served.

Jacopo. And Luria's fault was —?

Puccio. Oh, for fault — not much!

He led the attack, a thought impetuously,

— There's commonly more prudence;

now, he seemed

To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.

By over-concentrating strength at first

80 Against the enemy's van, both wings es-

caped:

That's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jacopo. As good as a full victory to Florence,

With the advantage of a fault beside —
What is it, Puccio? — that by pressing forward

With too impetuous . . .

Braccio. The report anon!

Thanks, sir — you have elsewhere a charge, I know. [*PUCCIO goes.*]

There's nothing done but I would do again;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,

And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jacopo. I was for waiting.

Braccio. Yes: so was not I.

He could not choose but tear that letter — true!

Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks: —

You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I. So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say!

Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Luria [to PUCCIO]. Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio!

All's at his pleasure.

Domizia [to LURIA]. Were I not forewarned

You would reject, as you do constantly, Praise, — I might tell you how you have deserved

Of Florence by this last and crowning feat:

But words offend.

Luria. Nay, you may praise me now. I want instruction every hour, I find, On points where once I saw least need of it;

And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,

Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now. After a battle half one's strength is gone; The glorious passion in us once appeased, Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.

All justice, power and beauty scarce appear Monopolised by Florence, as of late,

To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know

Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.

And peradventure I grow nearer you,

For I, too, want to know and be assured.

When a cause ceases to reward itself,

Its friend seeks fresh sustainments; praise is one,

And here stand you — you, lady, praise me well.

But yours — (your pardon) — is unlearned praise.

To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,

Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright

The soul o' the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as 40 act,

Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.

But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,

— Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge!

Was all well, Puccio?

Puccio. All was . . . must be well: If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .

— No, there's no doubt, we must — all was well done.

Luria. In truth? Still you are of the trade, my Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy. There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,

For the all-unestimated sum of pains 50

That go to a success the world can see: They praise then, but the best they never know

— While you know! So, if envy mix with it,

Hate, even, still the bottom-praise of all, Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!

— For nothing's like it; nothing else records

Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away

For ever — so, pure gold that praise must be!

And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best 60 Is still to come. There's one looks on apart

Whom all refers to, failure or success; What's done might be our best, our utmost work,

And yet inadequate to serve his need. Here's Braccio now, for Florence — here's our service —

Well done for us, seems it well done for him?

His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?

Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?

Braccio. This battle, with the foregone 70 services,

Saves Florence.

Luria. Why then, all is very well! Here am I in the middle of my friends,

Who know me and who love me, one and all.

And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak

Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like
me!

Well then, one always dreams of friends
at home;

And always comes, I say, the turning-
point

When something changes in the friendly
eyes

That love and look on you . . . so
slight, so slight . . .

And yet it tells you they are dead and
gone,

Or changed and enemies, for all their
words,

And all is mockery and a maddening show.

10 You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,

What is it in your eyes . . . those lips,
those brows . . .

Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well!

Come now — this battle saves you, all's
at end,

Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill, —
Come now, what's done against me, while
I speak,

In Florence? Come! I feel it in my
blood,

My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech

30 You are betraying me. What is it you do?

Have it your way, and think my use is
over

Think you are saved and may throw off
the mask —

Have it my way, and think more work re-
mains

Which I could do, — so, show you fear
me not!

Or prudent be, or daring, as you cho se,
But tell me — tell what I refused to know

At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well?
That letter?

My fate is sealed at Florence! What is it?

Braccio. Sir, I shall not deny what you
divine.

It is no novelty for innocence

30 To be suspected, but a privilege:

The after certain compensation comes.

Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some
time since,

Which Florence was bound, plainly, to
receive,

And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all.

I doubt not but your innocence will prove
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,

To them this evening, when the trial ends.

10 *Luria.* My trial?

Domizia. Florence, Florence
to the end,

My whole heart thanks thee!

Puccio [to BRACCIO]. What is "trial,"
sir?

It was not for a trial — surely, no —
I furnished you those notes from time to
time?

I held myself aggrieved — I am a man —
And I might speak, — ay, and speak mere
truth, too,

And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a — trial, do you say?

You should have told me!

Domizia. Nay, go on, go on!

His sentence! Do they sentence him?
What is it?

The block — wheel?

Braccio. Sentence there is none as yet, 50
Nor shall I give my own opinion now

Of what it should be, or is like to be.

When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!

Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Luria. They are right, then, to try me?

Braccio. I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done

In this procedure, — standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours

With utmost fit suspicious wariness. 60

In other matters, keep the mummery up!
Take all the experiences of all the world,

Each knowledge that broke through a
heart to life,

Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out
a brain,

— In other cases, know these, warrant
these,

And then dispense with these — 'tis very
well!

Let friend trust friend, and love demand
love's like,

And gratitude be claimed for benefits, —
There's grace in that, — and when the
fresh heart breaks,

The new brain proves a ruin, what of them? 70

Where is the matter of one moth the more

Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?

But Florence is no simple John or James

To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit

That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken

there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield
his place

To Paul and George intent to try their
chance!

Florence exists because these pass away. 80
She's a contrivance to supply a type

Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
She binds so many, that she grows out of
them —

Stands steady o'er their numbers, though
they change

And pass away — there's always what up-
holds

Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,

Of shapely cloud substantially the same!

- A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air,
Under the sun's straight influence: that is
well,
That is worth heaven should hold, and God
should bless!
And so is Florence,—the unseen sun
above,
Which draws and holds suspended all of
us,
Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
Differing from each and better than they
all.
- 10 And shall she dare to stake this perma-
nence
On any one man's faith? Man's heart is
weak,
And its temptations many: let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say!
Domizia. And as for hearts she chances
to mistake,
Wronged hearts, not destined to receive
reward,
Though they deserve it, did she only know,
—What should she do for these?
Braccio. What does she not?
Say, that she gives them but herself to serve
- 20 Here's Luria—what had profited his
strength,
When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the useless-
ness
Of strength exerted for strength's proper
sake?
But the truth is, she did create that strength,
Draw to the end the corresponding means.
The world is wide—are we the only men?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and good!
- 30 But shall we therefore, standing by our-
selves,
Insult our souls and God with the same
speech?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under
him:
What marks us from the hundreds and the
tens?
Florence took up, turned all one way the
soul
Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows!
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is
best?
Luria. Ah, brave me? And is this in-
deed the way
- 40 To gain your good word and sincere es-
teem?
Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their
praise?
- Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The captain of the conquering army,—
mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise,
ready
To show for what their names meant when
you gave,
Not what you styled them now you take
away?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or
me?
If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my
lords
Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving faith,
By what you call my sentence that's to
come—
Will friends advise I wait complacently? 60
If I meet Florence half way at their head,
What will you do, my mild antagonist?
Braccio. I will rise up like fire, proud
and triumphant
That Florence knew you thoroughly and
by me,
And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll say,
"The crown of our precautions! Here's
a man
"Was far advanced, just touched on the
belief
"Less subtle cities had accorded long;
"But we were wiser: at the end comes
this!"
And from that minute, where is Luria? 70
Lost!
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool
Who thus resents her first probation, flouts
As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free where angels fear:
He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
Must turn, and stand on his defence, for-
sooth!
Reward? You will not be worth punish-
ment!
Luria. And Florence knew me thus! 80
Thus I have lived,—
And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you otherwise!
Ay?—and what dropped from you, just
now, moreover?
Your information, Puccio?—Did your
skill,
Your understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me? Was this the end?

Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?
 You, lady, with the woman's stand apart,
 The heart to see with, past man's brain
 and eyes,
 . . . I cannot fathom why you should
 destroy

The unoffending one, you call your friend —
 Still, lessoned by the good examples here
 Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask —
 Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
 Than your friend's profit — in all those
 instances

10 Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong —
 All I remember now for the first time?

Domizia. I am a daughter of the
 Traversari,
 Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
 So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
 I knew the Florence that could doubt their
 faith,

Must needs mistrust a stranger's — dealing
 them

Punishment, would deny him his reward.
 And I believed, the shame they bore and
 died,

He would not bear, but live and fight
 against —

20 Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Luria. Hear them! All these against
 one foreigner!

And all this while, where is, in the whole
 world,

To his good faith a single witness?

*Tiburzio [who has entered unseen during
 the preceding dialogue].* Here!

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
 I live for Pisa; she's not lost to-day
 By many chances — much prevents from
 that!

Her army has been beaten, I am here,
 But Lucca comes at last, one happy
 chance!

I rather would see Pisa three times lost

30 Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
 The example of a traitor's happy fortune
 Would bring more evil in the end than
 good; —

Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself!
 I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
 My charge, the highest office, sword
 and shield!

You shall not, by my counsel, turn on
 Florence

Your army, give her calumny that ground —
 Nor bring one soldier: be you all we gain!
 And all she'll lose, — a head to deck some
 bridge,

40 And save the cost o' the crown should deck
 the head.

Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
 Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all
 eyes,

A proverb and a by-word in all mouths!
 Go you to Pisa! Florence is my place —

Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
 I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
 To Pisa!

Domizia. Ah, my Braccio, are you
 caught?

Braccio. Puccio, good soldier and good
 citizen,

Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
 Ready as fit, to serve in this event

50 Florence, who clear foretold it from the
 first —

Through me, she gives you the command
 and charge

She takes, through me, from him who
 held it late!

A painful trial, very sore, was yours:
 All that could draw out, marshal in array
 The selfish passions 'gainst the public
 good —

Slights, scorn, neglects, were heaped on
 you to bear:

And ever you did bear and bow the head!
 It had been sorry trial, to precede

Your feet, hold up the promise of reward 60
 For luring gleam; your footsteps kept the
 track

Thro' dark and doubt: take all the light
 at once!

Trial is over, consummation shines;
 Well have you served, as well henceforth
 command!

Puccio. No, no . . . I dare not! I
 am grateful, glad;

But *Luria* — you shall understand he's
 wronged:

And he's my captain: this is not the way
 We soldiers climb to fortune: think again!
 The sentence is not even passed, beside!
 I dare not: where's the soldier could? 70

Luria. Now, Florence —
 Is it to be? You will know all the strength
 O' the savage — to your neck the proof
 must go?

You will prove the brute nature? Ah, I
 see!

The savage plainly is impassible:
 He keeps his calm way through insulting
 words,

Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures — one of
 which

Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,
 But if he stolidly advance, march mute
 Without a mark upon his callous hide,
 Through the mere brushwood you grow 80
 angry with,

And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
 — You have to learn that when the true
 bar comes,

The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
 Which when you reach, you give the labour
 up,

Nor dash on, but lie down composed be-
 fore,

— He goes against it, like the brute he is:

It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
 I kept my course through past ingratitude:
 I saw — it does seem, now, as if I saw,
 Could not but see, those insults as they
 fell,
 — Ay, let them glance from off me, very
 like,
 Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
 You grew so bold on, while you so despised
 The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive
 mood,
 Was saving you: I bore and kept my
 course.
 20 Now real wrong fronts me: see if I suc-
 cumb!
 Florence withstands me? I will punish
 her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
 Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
 — Unauthorised to lay my office down,
 Retaining my full power to will and do:
 After — it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks!
 Go; you are free: join Lucca! I suspend
 All further operations till to-night.
 Thank you, and for the silence most of all!
 20 [To BRACCIO.] Let my complacent bland
 accuser go

Carry his self-approving head and heart
 Safe through the army which would
 trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign!
 Go, sir, to Florence; tell friends what I
 say —
 That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits
 them!

[To DOMIZIA.] You, lady, — you have
 black Italian eyes!
 I would be generous if I might: oh, yes —
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
 30 Which Florence finds God built between
 us both.

Alas, for generosity! this hour
 Asks retribution: bear it as you may,
 I must — the Moor — the savage, — par-
 don you!

Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth!

ACT IV.

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puccio. What Luria will do? Ah, 'tis
 yours, fair sir,
 Your and your subtle-witted master's part,
 To tell me that; I tell you what he can.

Jacopo. Friend, you mistake my sta-
 tion: I observe

The game, watch how my betters play,
 no more.

10 *Puccio.* But mankind are not pieces —
 there's your fault!

You cannot push them, and, the first move
 made,

Lean back and study what the next shall
 be,

In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,
 You find just where you left them, blacks
 and whites:

Men go on moving when your hand's away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
 This whole time, — firmlier than I choose
 to build,

Who never doubted it — of old, that is —
 With Luria in his ordinary mind.

But now, oppression makes the wise man 50
 mad:

How do I know he will not turn and stand
 And hold his own against you, as he may?
 Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa —
 well, —

Then, even if all happen to your wish,
 Which is a chance . . .

Jacopo. Nay — 'twas an oversight,
 Not waiting till the proper warrant came:
 You could not take what was not ours to
 give.

But when at night the sentence really
 comes,

Our city authorises past dispute
 Luria's removal and transfers the charge, 60
 You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puccio. Accept what? muster-rolls of
 soldiers' names?

An army upon paper? I want men,
 The hearts as well as hands — and where's
 a heart

But beats with Luria, in the multitude
 I come from walking through by Luria's
 side?

You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
 Head-like, upon their trunk; one heart
 feeds both,

They feel him there, live twice, and well
 know why.

— For they do know, if you are ignorant, 70
 Who kept his own place and respected

theirs,
 Managed their sweat, yet never spared his
 blood.

All was your act: another might have
 served —

There's peradventure no such dearth of
 heads —

But you chose Luria: so, they grew one
 flesh,

And now, for nothing they can understand,
 Luria removed, off is to roll the head;
 The body's mine — much I shall do with
 it!

Jacopo. That's at the worst.

Puccio. No — at the best, it is!
 Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side. 80
 Only we two with Luria in the camp
 Are left that keep the secret? You think
 that?

Hear what I know: from rear to van, no heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks
an eye

But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence; they
might pass —

No breast but gladlier beat when free of
such!

Our troops will catch up Luria, close him
round,

Bear him to Florence as their natural
lord,

10 Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jaçopo. And by mistake catch up along
with him

Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite
To still continue second in command!

Puccio. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate!

Your tricks succeed with me too well for
that!

I am as you have made me, live and die
To serve your end — a mere trained fighting-hack,

With words, you laugh at while they leave
your mouth

For my life's rule and ordinance of God!

20 I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my
blame,

As I was trained. I shall accept your
charge,

And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his
worth —

That, you may count on! — just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,

Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote, —
All because Luria superseded me —

30 Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place!

What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing? This was
clear —

I, once the captain, now was subaltern,
And so must keep complaining like a fool!
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say!

You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man, — for his realness'
sake

Thrust rudely in their place, — with such
regard

As might console them for their altered
rank.

40 Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here's all your pet deserves!
Of what account, then, is your laughing-
stock?

One word for all: whatever Luria does,
— If backed by his indignant troops he
turn,

Revenge himself, and Florence go to
ground, —

Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for
change

— And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief,
Dare fight against a man such fools call 54
false,

Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights
me, —

Whichever way he win, he wins for worth,
For every soldier, for all true and good!
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Husain. Saw'st thou? — For they are
gone! The world lies bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away!

Thou livest now, with men art man again!
Those Florentines were all to thee of old;

But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each, 60
There lie beneath thee thine own multi-
tudes!

Saw'st thou?

Luria. I saw.

Husain. Then, hold thy
course, my king!

The years return. Let thy heart have its
way:

Ah, they would play with thee as with all
else,

Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?

Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
Once at their occupation! Ere we know,

The free great heaven is shut, their stifling
pall

Drops till it frets the very tingling hair, 70
So weighs it on our head, — and, for the
earth,

Our common earth is tethered up and
down,

Over and across — "here shalt thou move,"
they cry!

Luria. Ay, Husain?

Husain. So have they spoiled all beside!
So stands a man girt round with Floren-
tines,

Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women,
boys and spies,

All in one tale, all singing the same song,
How thou must house, and live at bed and
board,

Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood 84
beat time

With theirs — or, all is nothing — thou art
lost —

A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as
they?

Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close
naked hand!

Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst kiss,
Without their priests that needs must glove it first,
Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
Love woman! Why, a very beast thou art!

Thou must . . .

Luria. Peace, Husain!

Husain. Ay but, spoiling all,
For all, else true things, substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!

Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,

10 Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place and play

So far, no farther — unabashed the while!
Thou with the soul that never can take rest —

Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
And never to be still, — wouldst thou make war?

Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
"Come over," say they, "have the honour due

"In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:
"It is to be for Florence, not thyself!

20 "For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
"For us, when war is made for Florence, see,

"How all is changed: the fire that fed on earth

"Now towers to heaven!" —

Luria. And what sealed up so long
My Husain's mouth?

Husain. Oh friend, oh lord — for me,
What am I? — I was silent at thy side,
Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood

Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again,

Again love as thou likest, hate as free!

30 Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare move,
If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!

Luria. So clear what Florence must expect of me?

Husain. Both armies against Florence!
Take revenge!

Wide, deep — to live upon, in feeling now, —

And, after live, in memory, year by year —
And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure have!

Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
10 And blends with life, to show it better by,
— How think'st thou? — I have turned
that light on them!

They called our thirst of war a transient thing;

"The battle-element must pass away
"From life," they said, "and leave a tranquil world."

— Master, I took their light and turned it full

On that dull turgid vein they said would burst

And pass away; and as I looked on life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid

And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same. 50

Why, 'twas all fighting, all their nobler life!

All work was fighting, every harm — defeat,

And every joy obtained — a victory!

Be not their dupe!

— Their dupe? That hour is past!

Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm:

All is determined. Silence for me now!
[HUSAIN goes.]

Luria. Have I heard all?

Domizia [advancing from the background.

No, Luria, I remain!

Not from the motives these have urged on thee,

Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,

And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay, 60

As failing of sustainment from thyself,

— Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,

Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,

Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim

The angel in thee, and reject the sprites

Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,

And mingle with his work and claim a share!

Inconsciously to the augustest end

Thou hast arisen: second not in rank

So much as time, to him who first ordained 70

That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.

Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first

The pride of lonely power, the life apart,

And made the eminences, each to each,

Lean o'er the level world and let it lie

Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;

So the few famous men of old combined,

And let the multitude rise underneath,

And reach them and unite — so Florence grew:

Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the 80 price.

But when the sheltered many grew in pride

And grudged the station of the elected ones,

Who, greater than their kind, are truly great

Only in voluntary servitude —

Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence: who
can tell

The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them,
live?

My light love keeps the matchless circle
safe,

My slender life proves what has passed
away.

10 I lived when they departed; lived to cling
To thee, the mighty stranger; thou wouldst
rise

And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I
knew.

I have done nothing; all was thy strong
bole.

But a bird's weight can break the infant
tree

Which after holds an acry in its arms,
And 'twas my care that nought should
warp thy spire

From rising to the height; the roof is
reached

O' the forest, break through, see extend
the sky!

Go on to Florence, Luria! 'Tis man's
cause!

20 Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to
dread:

Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more —

And while the ignoble past is justified,
Thou all the surelier warp'st the future

growth,
The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,

That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er
thee

Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes
require

As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast
reached.

Man calls thee, God requites thee! 'All is
said,

30 The mission of my House fulfilled at last:
And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech — it is now no woman's
time.

[DOMIZIA goes.

Luria. Thus at the last must figure
Luria, then!

Doing the various work of all his friends,
And answering every purpose save his
own.

No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish; but
him —

After the exploit what were left? Per-
chance

A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear

40 'Gainst Florence' self her own especial
arms, —

Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the
northern wit

But after! — once the easy vengeance
willed,

Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
— (Not in her domes and towers and

palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage!) — low,

As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for
ever,

Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling

Moor!
— For him, who did the irreparable wrong, 50

What would be left, his life's illusion fled, —
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide

world?
How strange that Florence should mistake

me so!
Whence grew this? What withdrew her

faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded chil-

dren talk
Against their mother, — they are wronged,

they say —
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!

So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their

speech:
But what could it have been in word or 60

deed
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken

more
Out of my heart, and all had changed

perhaps.
My fault, it must have been, — for, what

gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could

do!
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,

My Florentines? The notable revenge
I meditated! To stay passively,

Attend their summons, be as they dispose!
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,

And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then? 70
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,

Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she

must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart

was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines

Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised

me so,
At the glad outset? Had they loved me

less,
They had less feared what seemed a change

in me.
And after all, who did the harm? Not 80

they!
How could they interpose with those old

fools

I' the council? Suffer for those old fools' sake —

They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs

About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind

Out of our proper world, where we can see!

The sun that guides is closer to us! There —

There, my own orb! He sinks from out the sky.

Why, there! a whole day has he blessed the land,

My land, our Florence all about the hills, The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,

10 All have been blest: and yet we Florentines

With souls intent upon our battle here, Found that he rose too soon, or set too late, Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much — Therefore we wronged him! Does he turn in ire

To burn the earth that cannot understand? Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky, His task once ended? Night wipes blame away.

Another morning from my East shall spring And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
10 To watch and understand its work, no doubt.

So praise the new sun, the successor praise, Praise the new Luria and forget the old!

(Taking a phial from his breast.)

Strange! This is all I brought from my own land

To help me: Europe would supply the rest,

All needs beside, all other helps save one! I thought of adverse fortune, battle lost, The natural upbraiding of the loser, And then this quiet remedy to seek At end of the disastrous day. *(He drinks.)*

'Tis sought!

10 This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence

Is saved: I drink this, and ere night, — die! Strange!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Luria. I thought to do this, not to talk this: well,

Such were my projects for the city's good, To help her in attack or by defence.

Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take

Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change;

But not a little we provide against

— If you see clear on every point.

Puccio. Most clear.

Luria. Then all is said — not much, if you count words,

Yet to an understanding ear enough 40 And all that my brief stay permits, beside.

Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach

My elder in command, or threw a doubt Upon the very skill, it comforts me

To know I leave, — your steady soldier-ship

Which never failed me: yet, because it seemed

A stranger's eye might haply note defect That skill, through use and custom, over-looks —

I have gone into the old cares once more, As if I had to come and save again 50

Florence — that May — that morning! 'Tis night now.

Well — I broke off with? . . .

Puccio. Of the past campaign

You spoke — of measures to be kept in mind

For future use.

Luria. True, so . . . but, time — no time!

As well end here: remember this, and me! Farewell now!

Puccio. Dare I speak?

Luria. South o' the river —

How is the second stream called . . . no, — the third?

Puccio. Pesa.

Luria. And a stone's cast from the fording-place,

To the east, — the little mount's name? *Puccio.* Lupo.

Luria. Ay!

Ay — there the tower, and all that side is 60 safe!

With San Romano, west of Evola,

San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,

Five towers in all, — forget not?

Puccio. Fear not me!

Luria. — Nor to memorialise the Council now,

I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim, Who forced a pass by Staggia on the hills,

And kept the Sieneſe at check!

Puccio. One word —

Sir, I must speak! That you submit your self

To Florence' bidding, howſoe'er it prove, And give up the command to me — is 70 much,

Too much, perhaps: but what you tell me now,

Even will affect the other course you choose —

Poor as it may be, perils even that!

Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these plans

All militate for Florence, all conclude

Your formidable work to make her queen
O' the country, — which her rivals rose
against

When you began it, — which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price!
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record?

Luria. I —

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puccio. Where are you going, then?

You must decide

On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night — you, stealing through
our lines,

Who were this morning's Luria, — you
escape

To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been!
Where are you going?

Luria. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and
praise

(If you mind praise from your old captain
yet)

Each happy blow you strike for Florence.

Puccio. Ay, —

But ere you gain your shelter, what may
come?

For see — though nothing's surely known
as yet,

Still — truth must out — I apprehend the
worst.

If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on
foot.

Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her — why then,
you will!

And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.

Have you a friend to count on?

Luria. One sure friend.

Puccio. Potent?

Luria. All-potent.

Puccio. And he is apprised?

Luria. He waits me.

Puccio. So! — Then I, put in your
place,

Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their
fruit,

To this, the State's gift, now add yours
beside —

That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence
good.

And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself, — what
then?

Luria. Do it, my Puccio! I shall
know and praise.

Puccio. Though so, men say, "mark
what we gain by change

"— A Puccio for a Luria!"

Luria. Even so.

Puccio. Then, not for fifty hundred
Florences,

Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post

Here at your feet, my captain and my lord!
That such a cloud should break, such

trouble be,

Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever!

Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-
hand,

And so the bad thoughts came and the
worse words,

And all went wrong and painfully enough,
No wonder, — till, the right spot stumbled

on,

All the jar stops, and there is peace at
once!

I am yours now, — a tool your right-hand
wields!

God's love, that I should live, the man I
am,

On orders, warrants, patents, and the like,
As if there were no glowing eye i' the world

To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the
beats!

For, see — my doubt, where is it? — fear?
'tis flown!

And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child. Why, half-a-dozen
words

Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
Her error, my past folly — and all's right,
And you are Luria, our great chief again!
Or at the worst — which worst were best
of all —

To exile or to death I follow you.

Luria. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use
the privilege

You grant me: if I still command you, —
stay!

Remain here — my vicegerent, it shall be,
And not successor: let me, as of old,

Still serve the State, my spirit prompting
yours —

Still triumph, one for both. There!
Leave me now!

You cannot disobey my first command:
Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,

And what you promised to concert with
him!

Send him to speak with me — nay, no
farewell!

You shall be by me when the sentence
comes.

[PUCCIO goes.]

So, there's one Florentine returns again!
Out of the genial morning-company,

One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jacopo. I wait for your command, sir.

Luria. What, so soon?

I thank your ready presence and fair word.
I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act —
That weigh our motives, scrutinise our
thoughts.

So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take
. . . That is, of old. I am departing
hence

Under these imputations; that is nought —
I leave no friend on whom they may re-
bound,

Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger: all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall:
the roots

O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk —
No root of mine will throb, you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so —
The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatised they are, and lost in
shame.

Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command
Both served them and succeeded, in due
time;

He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple
truth

Before an active spirit, as I count yours:
And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the great chivalric soul we know.
I put it to your tact, sir — were't not well,
— A grace, though but for contrast's sake,
no more, —

If you who witness, and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance,
Should, of your proper motion, set your
skill

To indicate — that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance
befell

Those famous citizens, your countrymen?
Nay, you shall promise nothing: but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you —
good!

Jacopo. And if, the trial past, their
fame stand clear
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to
mine —

Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied!
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as my master-
wind;

The heart leads surelier: I must move
with you —

As greatest now, who ever were the best.
So, let the last and humblest of your ser-
vants

Accept your charge, as Braccio's hereto-
fore,
And tender homage by obeying you!

[JACOPO goes.]

Luria. Another! Luria goes not poorly
forth.

If we could wait! The only fault's with
time;

All men become good creatures: but so
slow!

Enter DOMIZIA.

Luria. Ah, you once more?

Domizia. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'Tis
I,

Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now!

Luria. I have done with it.

Domizia. How inexhaustibly the spirit
grows!

One object, she seemed erewhile born to
reach

With her whole energies and die content, —
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for, — is that
reached?

Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object; there's another world.
See! I have told the purpose of my life;
'Tis gained: you are decided, well or ill —
You march on Florence, or submit to
her. —

My work is done with you, your brow de-
clares.

But — leave you? More of you seems
yet to reach:

I stay for what I just begin to see.

Luria. So that you turn not to the past!

Domizia. You trace
Nothing but ill in it — my selfish impulse,
Which sought its end and disregarded
yours?

Luria. Speak not against your nature:
best, each keep

His own — you, yours — most, now that
I keep mine,

— At least, fall by it, having too weakly
stood.

God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine, so
We would confound: the lesser has its use,

Which, when it apes the greater, is forgone.

I; born a Moor, lived half a Florentine;
But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.

Beside, there's something makes me under-
stand

Our nature: I have seen it.

Domizia. Aught like mine?

Luria. In my own East . . . if you would stoop and help
My barbarous illustration! It sounds ill;
Yet there's no wrong at bottom: rather, praise.

Domizia. Well?

Luria. We have creatures there, which if you saw

The first time, you would doubtless marvel at

For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.

And though it were a lively moment's shock

When you first found the purpose of forked tongues

That seem innocuous in their lambent play,

o Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,

Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best —

So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines:

Yet . . .

Domizia. I am here to listen.

Luria. My own East!

How nearer God we were! He glows above

With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours:

20 We feel him, nor by painful reason know!

The everlasting minute of creation

Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;

All changes at his instantaneous will,

Not by the operation of a law

Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.

His hand is still engaged upon his world —

Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,

For is not God all-mighty? To recast

The world, erase old things and make them new,

30 What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.

And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient — comes, and lo, is gone —

While Northern thought is slow and durable,
Surely a mission was reserved for me,

Who, born with a perception of the power

And use of the North's thought for us of the East,

Should have remained, turned knowledge to account,

Giving thought's character and permanence
To the too transitory feeling there —

40 Writing God's message plain in mortal words.

Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,

Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine, —
And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me! There, how all had under-

stood,
Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp
and keep,

Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
Me, who . . .

Domizia. Who here the greater task
achieve,

More needful even: who have brought
fresh stuff

For us to mould, interpret and prove
right, —

New feeling fresh from God, which, could
we know

O' the instant, where had been our need
of it?

— Whose life re-teaches us what life should
be,

What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, once revealed but taught us so long
since

That, having mere tradition of the fact, —
Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,

The early traits all dropped away, — we 6c
said

On sight of faith like yours, "So looks not
faith

"We understand, described and praised
before."

But still, the feat was dared; and though
at first

It suffered from our haste, yet trace by
trace

Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
Our slow thought does its work, and all's
re-known.

Oh, noble Luria! What you have decreed
I see not, but no animal revenge,

No brute-like punishment of bad by
worse —

It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way 70
Traced for me by convention and mistake,

Has gained that calm approving eye and
brow!

Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, he whom I trust with
mine!

Luria. In time!

Domizia. How, Luria?

Luria. It is midnight now,
And they arrive from Florence with my
fate.

Domizia. I hear no step.

Luria. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Husain. The man returned from Flor-
ence!

Luria. As I knew

Husain. He seeks thee.

Luria. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Husain. A movement of the Luccese troops
Southward —

Luria. Toward Florence? Have
out instantly . . .

Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care
henceforth.

In — quick — 'tis nearly midnight! Bid
him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Tiburzio? — not at Pisa?

Tiburzio. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must
think

By such procedure I have served her best.

A people is but the attempt of many

To rise to the completer life of one;

And those who live as models for the mass

Are singly of more value than they all.

Such man are you, and such a time is this,

That your sole fate concerns a nation more

Than much apparent welfare: that to
prove

Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,

Imports us far beyond to-day's event,

A battle's loss or gain: man's mass re-
mains, —

Keep but God's model safe, new men will
rise

To take its mould, and other days to prove

How great a good was Luria's glory.

True —

I might go try my fortune as you urged

And, joining Lucca, helped by your dis-
grace,

Repair our harm — so were to-day's work
done;

But where leave Luria for our sons to see?

No, I look farther. I have testified

(Declaring my submission to your arms)

Her full success to Florence, making clear

Your probity, as none else could: I spoke,

And out it shone!

Luria. Ah — until Braccio spoke!

Braccio. Till Braccio told in just a word
the whole —

His lapse to error, his return to knowledge:

Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should

droop the head,

I whom shame rests with! Yet I dare

look up,

Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,

Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight
end!

'Tis morn approaches! Still you answer
not?

Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away;

Our faces, which phantasmal grew and

false,

Are all that felt it: they change round you, 40

turn

Truly themselves now in its vanishing.

Speak, Luria! Here begins your true

career:

Look up, advance! All now is possible,

Fact's grandeur, no false dreaming!

Dare and do!

And every prophecy shall be fulfilled

Save one — (nay, now your word must

come at last)

— That you would punish Florence!

Husain [pointing to LURIA'S dead body].

That is done.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

1846.

ACT FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE; AND
ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers.

CHIAPPINO, their friend.

OGNIBEN, the Pope's Legate.

Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. PLACE, Faenza.

ACT I.

SCENE. — Inside LUITOLFO'S house.

CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eulalia. What is it keeps Luitolfo?

Night's fast falling,

And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the
ave-bell

Sounded before he sought the Provost's
house?

I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!

How do you think, Chiappino? If our
lord

The Provost were less friendly to your
friend

Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble — should not
you?

10 Why are you silent when so many times

I turn and speak to you?

Chiappino.

That's good!

Eulalia.

You laugh!

Chiappino. Yes. I had fancied nothing
that bears price

In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.

Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and
blood,

There's nothing mine, I fancied, — till you
spoke:

— Counting, you see, as "nothing" the
permission

To study this peculiar lot of mine

20 In silence: well, go silence with the rest

Of the world's good! What can I say,
shall serve?

Eulalia. This, — lest you, even more
than needs, embitter

Our parting: say your wrongs have cast,
for once,

A cloud across your spirit!

Chiappino. How a cloud?

Eulalia. No man nor woman loves you,
did you say?

Chiappino. — My God, were't not for thee!

Eulalia. Ay, God remains,
Even did men forsake you.

Chiappino. Oh, not so!
Were't not for God, I mean, what hope of
truth —

Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay
with man?

I, now — the homeless friendless penni- 3
less

Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak
to you, —

Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for
my death,

(The thing that tempts me most) help
speaking lies

About your friendship and Luitolfo's
courage

And all our townsfolk's equanimity —
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself

Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with, —

God,
Did I not turn to thee! It is thy prompt-
ing

I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel 4
Would die along my coward lip, I know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its
way,

Reclaim thou! Give me truth — truth,
power to speak —

And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth! Or, stay, that spoken
truth,

Who knows but you, too, may approve?

Eulalia. Ah, well —

Keep silence then, Chiappino!

Chiappino. You would hear,

You shall now, — why the thing we please to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service: no whit more.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo; both
At one time, much with the same circumstance

Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night

Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine — I, the shadow.

10 "Why?" asks the world. "Because," replies the world

To its complacent self, "these playfellows,
"Who took at church the holy-water drop
"Each from the other's finger, and so forth, —

"Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper

"Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,

"Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.

"A happy-tempered bringer of the best

"Out of the worst; who bears with what's past cure,

"And puts so good a face on't — wisely passive

20 "Where action's fruitless, while he remedies

"In silence what the foolish rail against;

"A man to smooch such natures as parade

"Of opposition must exasperate;

"No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak

"Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous

"At lucky junctures; one who won't forego

"The after-battle work of binding wounds,

"Because, forsooth he'd have to bring himself

"To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!"

30 — Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
What comes so glibly from the common mouth,

About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eulalia. Because that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Chiappino. I thought
You would be readier with the other half
Of the world's story, my half! Yet, 'tis true.

For all the world does say it. Say your worst!

True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin,"
When a man did sin; if I could not say it,

40 I glared it at him; if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him; then my part seemed over.

God's may begin yet: so it will, I trust.

Eulalia. If the world outraged you, did we?

Chiappino. What's "me"?

That you use well or ill? It's man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!

Here's our Faenza birthplace; they send here

A provost from Ravenna: how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about.

"Then, end his rule!" — "Ah yes, one stroke does that!

"But patience under wrong works slow 50 and sure.

"Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,

"Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah —

"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,

"Some human sympathy which, once excite,

"And all the lump were leavened quietly:

"So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings-down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.

Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, 60 will you?

Diversify your tactics, give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,

While we die in our misery patient deaths?

We all are outraged then, and I the first:

I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk

Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,

I hate!

Eulalia. We share a common censure, then.

'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Chiappino. Oh, shall I let you so escape 70 me, lady?

Come, on your own ground, lady, — from yourself,

(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)

What have I got to be so grateful for?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other

Paid by Luitolfo?

Eulalia. Shame, Chiappino!

Chiappino. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!

— Which is to see. He paid my fines — my friend,

Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer, — soon, your husband: well —

I loved you. 80

Eulalia. Hold!

Chiappino. You knew it, years ago.

When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim

- Because you gave me your silk mask to hold —
 My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
 The people's Provost to their heart's content,
 — My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
 Banishes now because he cannot bear, —
 You knew . . . but you do your parts —
 my part, I:
 So be it! You flourish, I decay: all's well.
Eulalia. I hear this for the first time.
Chiappino. The fault's there?
 Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
- 10 Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst,
 Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
 Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
Eulalia, truce with toying for this once!
 A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
 For the last time — why, what's to fear from me?
 You knew I loved you!
Eulalia. Not so, on my faith!
 You were my now-affianced lover's friend —
 Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
 All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
- 20 See how your words come from you in a crowd!
Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
 In all that challenges respect and love:
 Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
 I say all this by fascination, sure:
 I, all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
 It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
Luitolfo pities . . .
Chiappino. — You too pity? Do!
 But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
 This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
 30 Was't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
 To grow so far familiar with your charms
 As next contrive some way to win them —
 which
 To do, an age seemed far too brief — for, see!
 We all aspire to heaven; and there lies heaven
 Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
 How dare we go without a reverent pause,
 A growing less unfit for heaven? Just so,
 I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
 Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
 40 But I must have, beside, the very man
- Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul
 Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
 — Must have him load me with his benefits
 — For fortune's fiercest stroke?
Eulalia. Justice to him
 That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
 Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
 Of simple friendship — bounties, benefits?
Chiappino. No: the straight course had been to call them thus.
 Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
 Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
 50 We both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said:
 "He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
 "A trifle out of superfluity?
 "He had forgotten he had done as much."
 So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
 To take him at his word, there stood by you
 My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
 And urge his nothings, even banter me
 Before you — but my tongue was tied. A dream!
 Let's wake: your husband . . . how you 64
 shake at that!
 Good — my revenge!
Eulalia. Why should I
 shake? What forced
 Or forces me to be *Luitolfo's* bride?
Chiappino. There's my revenge, that
 nothing forces you.
 No gratitude, no liking of the eye
 Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
 Of habit — here so many times he came,
 So much he spoke, — all these compose the tie
 That pulls you from me. Well, he paid
 my fines,
 Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish
 from table;
 He spoke a good word to the Provost here, 70
 Hel'd me up when my fortunes fell away
 — I had not looked so well to let me
 drop —
 Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump,
 even,
 Whose boughs they played beneath —
 much more a friend.
 But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
 Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
 Like me. I could not change: you know
 the rest.
 I've spoke my mind too fully out, by
 chance,
 This morning to our Provost; so, ere night
 I leave the city on pain of death. And so
 now
 On my account there's gallant intercession

Goes forward — that's so graceful!
and anon
He'll noisily come back: "the intercession
"Was made and fails; all's over for us
both;
"Tis vain contending; I would better
go."

And I do go — and straight to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
(Economy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased —
you, with him,

10 He with himself, and all of you with me
— "Who," say the citizens, "had done far
better

"In letting people sleep upon their woes,
"If not possessed with talent to relieve
them

"When once awake; — but then I had,"
they'll say,

"Doubtless some unknown compensating
pride

"In what I did; and as I seem content
"With ruining myself, why, so should they
be."

And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily!

20 Why does not your Luitolfo come? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then?

Eulalia. Chiappino!

Chiappino. Never?

Eulalia. Never.

Chiappino. That's sad.

Say what I might,
There was no help from being sure this
while

You loved me. Love like mine must have
return,

I thought: no river starts but to some sea.
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part,

30 Which made you choose Luitolfo; so, ex-
cepting

From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman. Well, the other dream may
break!

If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 'twere
lodged,

I should, I think, be forced to love again:
Else there's no right nor reason in the
world.

Eulalia. "If you knew," say you, —
but I did not know.

That's where you're blind, Chiappino! —
a disease

Which if I may remove, I'll not repent
40 The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You'd be as we.

Chiappino. I should be? . . . that;
again!

I, to my friend, my country and my —
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eulalia. As we.

Chiappino. Now, I'll say something to
remember.

I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility. — Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time: 50
I trust in God — the right shall be the
right

And other than the wrong, while he en-
dures:

I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: 'so, seeing these men and
myself,

Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.
I'll not curse — God bears with them, well
may I —

But I — protest against their claiming me.
I simply say, if that's allowable,

I would not (broadly) do as they have done. 60

— God curse this townful of born slaves,
bred slaves,

Branded into the blood and bone, slaves!
Curse

Whoever loves, above his liberty,

House, land or life! and . . .

[*A knocking without.*

— bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eulalia. How he knocks!

Chiappino. The peril, lady!

"Chiappino, I have run a risk — a risk!

"For when I prayed the Provost (he's my
friend)

"To grant you a week's respite of the
sentence

"That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,

"He shrugged his shoulder — I say, 70
shrugged it! Yes,

"And fright of that drove all else from my
head.

"Here's a good purse of *scudi*: off with
you,

"Lest of that shrug come what God only
knows!

"The *scudi* — friend, they're trash — no
thanks, I beg!

"Take the north gate, — for San Vitale's
suburb,

"Whose double taxes you appealed against,
"In discomposure at your ill-success

"Is apt to stone you: there, there — only
go!

"Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.

"Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you 80
squeeze my wrist!"

— Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous
friend?

[*As he opens the door, LUITOLFO
rushes in, his garments disordered.*

Eulalia. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luitolfo. There's more — and more of it!

Eulalia — take the garment! No — you, friend!

You take it and the blood from me — you dare!

Eulalia. Oh, who has hurt you? where's the wound?

Chiappino. "Who," say you?

The man with many a touch of virtue yet! The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,

And this comes of it. Miserable hound!

This comes of temporising, as I said!

Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!

10 Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight

To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luitolfo. What says he?

Chiappino. I'll do justice on him.

Luitolfo. Him?

Chiappino. The Provost.

Luitolfo. I've just killed him.

Eulalia. Oh, my God!

Luitolfo. My friend, they're on my trace; they'll have me — now!

They're round him, busy with him: soon they'll find

He's past their help, and then they'll be on me!

Chiappino, save *Eulalia*! I forget . . .

Were you not bound for . . .

Chiappino. Lugo?

Luitolfo. Ah — yes — yes!

That was the point I prayed of him to change.

20 Well, go — be happy! Is *Eulalia* safe? They're on me!

Chiappino. 'Tis through me they reach you, then!

Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms — that's right!

Now tell me what you've done; explain how you

That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

Luitolfo. What was peace for, *Chiappino*?

I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,

Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days

Were just the prelude to a day like this.

I cried "You call me 'friend'; save my true friend!

30 "Save him, or lose me!"

Chiappino. But you never said You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luitolfo. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Chiappino. Well? He persisted?

Luitolfo. — "Would so order it "You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;

I poured my heart's store of indignant words

Out on him: then — I know not! He retorted,

And I . . . some staff lay there to hand — I think

He bade his servants thrust me out — I struck . . .

Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, 40 you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eulalia. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to us —

Much to yourself; believe not, all the world

Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Chiappino. And you?

Eulalia. I stay.

Chiappino. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!

This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows

My path of flight and place of refuge — see —

Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo, 50 Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!

Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch A compass round about. There's time

enough Ere they can reach us, so you straightway

make For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not! On

with it — The cloak, *Luitolfo*, do you hear me?

See — He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I

must — Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?

Eulalia. The north-west gate, over the bridge?

Luitolfo. I know.

Chiappino. Well, there — you are not 60 frightened? all my route

Is traced in that: at Venice you escape Their power. *Eulalia*, I am master here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who complies mechanically.*

In time! Nay, help me with him — so! He's gone.

Eulalia. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall

As our accomplice.

Chiappino. Mere accomplice? See!
[*Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.*]

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these?

Eulalia. You take Luitolfo's place?

Chiappino. Die for him.

Eulalia. Well done!

[*Shouts increase.*]

Chiappino. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent; I must speak: or sing —
How natural to sing now!

Eulalia. Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive

'Tis not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,

10 Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's
life

With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart
goes forth

Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep through
the streets:

How easy for them both to die like this!

I am not sure that I could live as they.

Chiappino. Here they come, crowds!

They pass the gate? Yes! — No! —

One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock
all.

Eulalia. At least Luitolfo has escaped.

What cries!

Chiappino. If they would drag one to
the market-place,

20 One might speak there!

Eulalia. List, list!

Chiappino. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Chiappino. I killed the Provost!

The Populace [*speaking together*]. 'Twas
Chiappino, friends!

Our saviour! The best man at last as
first!

He who first made us feel what chains we
wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
At last saves us — our best citizen!

Oh, have you only courage to speak
now?

My eldest son was christened a year since
"Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in
mind —

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!
30 The city's in our hands. The guards are
fled.

Do you, the cause of all, come down —
come up —

Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,
Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own
reward!

The peril over, its reward begins!

Come and harangue us in the market-
place!

Eulalia. Chiappino?

Chiappino. Yes — I under-
stand your eyes!

You think I should have promptlier dis-
owned

This deed with its strange unforeseen
success,

In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun. 40

To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,

We easily shall make him full amends:

And meantime — if we save them as they
pray,

And justify the deed by its effects?

Eulalia. You would, for worlds, you had
denied at once.

Chiappino. I know my own intention,
be assured!

All's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

ACT II.

SCENE. — *The Market-place. LUITOLFO
in disguise mingling with the Populace
assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.*

1st Bystander [*to LUITOLFO*]. You, a
friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is
vanished, — in all probability killed on the 50
night that his patron the tyrannical Pro-
vost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a
month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citi-
zen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost
that is like to be, this very morning, —
Chiappino!

Luitolfo. He the new Provost?

2nd Bystander. Up those steps will he
go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while
Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, 60
reads the new dignitary's title to the people,
according to established custom: for which
reason, there is the assemblage you inquire
about.

Luitolfo. Chiappino — the late Pro-
vost's successor? Impossible! But tell
me of that presently. What I would know
first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so
necessarily have been killed on that
memorable night? 70

3rd Bystander. You were Luitolfo's
friend? So was I. Never, if you will
credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a
milk-sop. He, with all the opportunities
in the world, furnished by daily converse
with our oppressor, would not stir a finger
to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in
solitary majesty and . . . how does one
go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,
— this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing 80
the indignation of an aroused and liberated
people, fled precipitately. He may have
got trodden to death in the press at the
south-east gate, when the Provost's guards

fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master, — if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luitolfo. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner, — such as San Cassiano, where his estate was, — receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here — how, for instance, the
10 Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded — or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost — and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd Bystander. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his
20 uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip, — how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger. — And so did he begin; but, as he
30 arrived at thirteen, we will say, — thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene¹ of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent, — consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone — Ha, ha!

40 Luitolfo [aside]. (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd Bystander. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luitolfo. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantries! I know
50 Chiappino better.

1st Bystander. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luitolfo. It is most to the purpose, that I
60 know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost,

you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st Bystander. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace — there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of re- 80 volts!" (laughing gently to himself) — "Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar — So! And now, my revolvers and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not
90 another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions, — and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place, — once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by some- 120 body from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

¹ Patron saint of Bohemia, murdered by the Emperor Wenceslaus.

Luitolfo. Do you see? I recognise him there!

3rd Bystander. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic, — "And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?" — returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. "Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino: "Ay, in that, I agree," returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luitolfo. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st Bystander. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way, — "whereas what right," asked he, "has any man to wish to be superior to another?" — whereat, "Ah, sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers — this — that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows, — all that you so disclaim, — but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it, — only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion — to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither

does our gaping friend, the burgesse yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still, — the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!" And so chaffing, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luitolfo. And the result is . . .

1st Bystander. Way that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love — at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth — becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luitolfo [withdrawing a little]. I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of — what she called, some experiment yet in process — I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: how could I else? But if this they say be true — if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eulalia. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Chiappino. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them — do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organisation shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eulalia. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a

Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realise those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Chiappino. Say, I would fain realise my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay or a labourer to help me, — stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to experiment upon — ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eulalia. So, the love breaks away too!

Chiappino. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens — needs more than one object to content it, — and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part, — nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman, — manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, staff, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eulalia. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word — which shall complete my instruction — does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Chiappino. How the author?

Eulalia. That blow now called yours . . .

Chiappino. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine — a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away, — a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole

mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eulalia. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogniben. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts. By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Chiappino. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogniben. She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say — not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be, — not are, nor will be.

Chiappino. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogniben. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!" — for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him — gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before — on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa — instead of being the beggar he then was, — I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered. — To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Chiappino. I must have a woman that can sympathise with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogniben. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one — avowedly lesser — contest with

you on that score would never do) — such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather? — on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Chiappino. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness —

Ogniben. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her, — as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Chiappino. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern — and easily, too — the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence, — when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogniben. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say, — New truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew

when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths, — impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business: — you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was, — do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says, — so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable? — “Contradictions? Of course there were,” say you!

Chiappino. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply?

Ogniben. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer — you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, “Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving” — even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, “I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows

from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!” Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosities with age and experience . . .

Chiappino. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

10 *Ogniben.* Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning,
20 David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy
30 for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathise with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, “So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or wider I may extend its action.” I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also
40 continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his arch-angels and consorts with them: though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only
50 as you profess to think and, so, ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Chiappino. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed
60 soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—ex-

ercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogniben. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—
“Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go!” The first time a poor devil,
70 who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!”—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors
80 used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require!” Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—
all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all
90 you men of genius? It is this: that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever
100 could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Chiappino. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You
110 wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogniben. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!). Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods
120 rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it

is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Chiappino. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogniben. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Chiappino. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty, already.

Ogniben. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Chiappino. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogniben. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorise no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Chiappino. And that stipulation?

Ogniben. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Chiappino. Ha!

Ogniben. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Chiappino. Who heard of this?

Ogniben. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Chiappino. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogniben. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo [coming forward]. I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luitolfo. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eulalia. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino,—to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogniben. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of

coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have
10 time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it,— would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those, angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego
claim after claim on the world, puts up 20 with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,— hoping nobody may murder him,— he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,— why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out 30 of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now — (ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!) — and now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four*-and-twenty leaders of revolts.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

1850.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

I.

OUT of the little chapel I burst
 Into the fresh night-air again.
 Five minutes full, I waited first
 In the doorway, to escape the rain
 That drove in gusts down the common's
 centre

At the edge of which the chapel stands,
 Before I plucked up heart to enter.

Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
 Reached past me, groping for the latch
 Of the inner door that hung on catch
 More obstinate the more they fumbled,

Till, giving way at last with a scold
 Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled

One sheep more to the rest in fold,
 And left me irresolute, standing sentry
 In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
 Six feet long by three feet wide,
 Partitioned off from the vast inside —

I blocked up half of it at least.

20 No remedy; the rain kept driving.

They eyed me much as some wild beast,
 That congregation, still arriving,
 Some of them by the main road, white
 A long way past me into the night,
 Skirting the common, then diverging;
 Not a few suddenly emerging
 From the common's self thro' the paling-
 gaps,

— They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
 Where the road stops short with its safe-
 guard border

30 Of lamps, as tired of such disorder; —
 But the most turned in yet more abruptly
 From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
 Where the town's bad blood once slept
 corruptly,

Which now the little chapel rallies
 And leads into day again, — its priestli-
 ness

Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face
 on

Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 40 That, where you cross the common as I
 did,

And meet the party thus presided,
 "Mount Zion" with Love-lane at the back
 of it,

They front you as little disconcerted
 As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah
 behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the com-
 mon,

In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
 Panting and bewildered, down-clapping

Her umbrella with a mighty report, 50
 Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,

A wreck of whalebones; then, with a
 snort,

Like a startled horse, at the interloper
 (Who humbly knew himself improper,
 But could not shrink up small enough)

— Round to the door, and in, — the gruff
 Hinge's invariable scold

Making my very blood run cold.

Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
 On broken clogs, the many-tattered

60 Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-
 mother

Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
 Somehow up, with its spotted face,
 From the cold, on her breast, the one
 warm place;

She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
 Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
 Her tribute to the deer-rat, sopping
 Already from my own clothes' dropping,
 Which yet she seemed to grudge I should
 stand on:

Then, stooping down to take off her 70
 pattens,

She bore them defiantly, in each hand
 one,

Planted together before her breast
 And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.

Close on her heels, the dingy satins
 Of a female something, past me flitted,

With lips as much too white, as a streak
 Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;

And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
 That was left of a woman once,

Holding at least its tongue for the nonce. 80
 Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent

Thief,

With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
 And eyelids screwed together tight,
 Led himself in by some inner light.

And, except from him, from each that entered,

I got the same interrogation —

"What, you the alien, you have ventured

"To take with us, the elect, your station?"

"A carer for none of it, a Gallio!" —

Thus, plain as print, I read the glance

At a common prey, in each countenance

As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.

And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,

10 The draught, it always sent in shutting,

Made the flame of the single tallow candle

In the cracked square lantern I stood under,

Shot its blue lip at me, rebutting

As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:

I verily fancied the zealous light

(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite

Would shudder itself clean off the wick,

With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.¹

There was no standing it much longer.

20 "Good folks," thought I, as resolve grew stronger,

"This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor

"When the weather sends you a chance visitor?

"You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,

"And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!

"But still, despite the pretty perfection

"To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,

"And, taking God's word under wise protection,

"Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,

"And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares, —

30 "Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,

"If I should choose to cry, as now, 'Shares!' —

"See if the best of you bars me my ration!

"I prefer, if you please, for my expounder

"Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder;

"Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest

"Supposing I don the marriage vestment:

"So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,

"And carve me my portion at your quickliest!"

10 Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad

With wizened face in want of scap,

And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,

(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,

¹ See Rev. i. 20.

To get the fit over, poor gentle creature, And so avoid disturbing the preacher)

— Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise

At the shutting door, and entered likewise,

Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,

And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,

And found myself in full conventicle,

— To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,

On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,

Which, calling its flock to their special clover,

Found all assembled and one sheep over,

Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III.

I very soon had enough of it.

The hot smell and the human noises,

And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,

Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,

Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure

Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,

As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,

To meet his audience's avidity.

You needed not the wit of the Sibyl

To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:

No sooner our friend had got an inkling

Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,

(When'er 'twas the thought first struck him,

How death, at unawares, might duck him

Deeper than the grave, and quench

The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench) 70

Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,

As to hug the book of books to pieces:

And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,

Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,

Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours, —

So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.

And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:

Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours

Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours

Were help which the world could be saved 80 without.

'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet

A qualm or two at my spiritual dict,

Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered

Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:

But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,

Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling
faster,

While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.

The man with the handkerchief untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was
doing.

The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too pro-
voking!

My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff
of it;

So, saying like Eve when she plucked
the apple,

"I wanted a taste, and now there's
enough of it,"

I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull

In the wind too; the moon was risen,

And would have shone out pure and full,

But for the ramparted cloud-prison,

Block on block built up in the West,

For what purpose the wind knows best,

Who changes his mind continually,

And the empty other half of the sky

Seemed in its silence as if it knew

What, any moment, might lock through

A chance gap in that fortress massy:—

Through its fissures you get hints

Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,

Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy

Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,

Like furnace-smoke just ere flames bellow,

All a-simmer with intense strain

To let her through, — then blank again,

At the hope of her appearance failing.

Just by the chapel, a break in the railing

Shows a narrow path directly across;

'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss —

Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.

I stooped under and soon felt better;

My head grew lighter, my limbs more
supple,

As I walked on, glad to have slipt the
fetter.

My mind was full of the scene I had left,

That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,

— How this outside was pure and differ-
ent!

The sermon, now — what a mingled weft

Of good and ill! Were either less,

Its fellow had coloured the whole dis-
tinctly;

But alas for the excellent earnestness,

And the truths, quite true if stated suc-
cinctly,

But as surely false, in their quaint present-
ment,

However to pastor and flock's content-
ment!

Say rather, such truths looked false to your
eyes,

With his provings and parallels twisted
and twined,

Till how could you know them, grown
double their size

In the natural fog of the good man's
mind,

Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps?

Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover; 60

The zeal was good, and the aspiration;

And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,

Pharaoh received no demonstration,

By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity, —

Although, as our preacher thus embellished
it,

Apparently his hearers relished it

With so unfeigned a gust — who knows if

They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?

But so it is everywhere, one way with all 70
of them!

These people have really felt, no doubt,

A something, the motion they style the

Call of them;

And this is their method of bringing
about,

By a mechanism of words and tones,

(So many texts in so many groans)

A sort of reviving and reproducing,

More or less perfectly, (who can tell?)

The mood itself, which strengthens by
using;

And how that happens, I understand
well.

A tune was born in my head last week, 80

Out of the thump-thump and shriek-
shriek

Of the train, as I came by it, up from
Manchester;

And when, next week, I take it back again,

My head will sing to the engine's clack
again,

While it only makes my neighbour's
haunches stir,

— Finding no dormant musical sprout

In him, as in me, to be jolted out.

'Tis the taught already that profits by
teaching;

He gets no more from the railway's preach-
ing

Than, from this preacher who does the 90
rail's office, I:

Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous
eye on.

Still, why paint over their door "Mount
Zion,"

To which all flesh shall come, saith the
prophecy?

v.

- But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
 After how many modes, this Christmas-
 Eve,
 Does the self-same weary thing take place?
 The same endeavour to make you be-
 lieve,
 And with much the same effect, no more:
 Each method abundantly convincing,
 As I say, to those convinced before,
 But scarce to be swallowed without
 wincing
 By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
 10 I have my own church equally:
 And in this church my faith sprang first!
 (I said, as I reached the rising ground,
 And the wind began again, with a burst
 Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
 From the heart beneath, as if, God speed-
 ing me,
 I entered his church-door, nature leading
 me)
 — In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And probing their immensities,
 I found God there, his visible power;
 20 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of the power, an equal evidence
 That his love, there too, was the nobler
 dower.
 For the loving worm within its clod,
 Were diviner than a loveless god
 Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
 You know what I mean: God's all,
 man's nought:
 But also, God, whose pleasure brought
 Man into being, stands away
 As it were a handbreadth off, to give
 30 Room for the newly-made to live,
 And look at him from a place apart,
 And use his gifts of brain and heart,
 Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
 Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
 Man's very elements from man,
 Saying, "But all is God's" — whose plan
 Was to create man and then leave him
 Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
 But able to glorify him too,
 40 As a mere machine could never do,
 That prayed or praised, all unaware
 Of its fitness for aught but praise and
 prayer,
 Made perfect as a thing of course.
 Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
 Of love and power as a pin-point rock:
 And, looking to God who ordained divorce
 Of the rock from his boundless continent,
 Sees, in his power made evident,
 Only excess by a million-fold
 50 O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
 For, note: man's hand, first formed to
 carry
 A few pounds' weight, when taught to
 marry
- Its strength with an engine's, lifts a moun-
 tain,
 — Advancing in power by one degree;
 And why count steps through eternity?
 But love is the ever-springing fountain:
 Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
 For the water's play, but the water-head —
 How can he multiply or reduce it?
 As easy create it, as cause it to cease; 6
 He may profit by it, or abuse it,
 But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
 As power does: be love less or more
 In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
 Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
 Love's sum remains what it was before.
 So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
 As seen through power, ever above
 All modes which make it manifest,
 70 My soul brought all to a single test —
 That he, the Eternal First and Last,
 Who, in his power, had so surpassed
 All man conceives of what is might, —
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
 — Would prove as infinitely good;
 Would never, (my soul understood,)
 With power to work all love desires,
 Bestow e'en less than man requires;
 That he who endlessly was teaching,
 80 Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,
 (So that to master this alone,
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,
 I must go on learning endlessly)
 Would never need that I, in turn,
 Should point him out defect unheeded,
 And show that God had yet to learn
 What the meanest human creature
 needed,
 — Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
 Tracking his way through doubts and 90
 fears,
 While the stupid earth on which I stay
 Suffers no change, but passive adds
 Its myriad years to myriads,
 Though I, he gave it to, decay,
 Seeing death come and choose about me,
 And my dearest ones depart without me.
 No: love which, on earth, amid all the
 shows of it,
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life
 in it,
 The love, ever growing there, spite of the
 strife in it,
 Shall arise, made perfect, from death's 100
 repose of it.
 And I shall behold thee, face to face,
 O God, and in thy light retrace
 How in all I loved here, still wast
 thou!
 Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would
 now,
 I shall find as able to satiate
 The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
 Thou art able to quicken and sublimiate,

With this sky of thine, that I now walk
under,
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking thee, in a narrow shrine —
Be this my way! And this is mine!

VI.

For lo, what think you? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breath-
less,

North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, death-
less,

Sprang across them and stood steady.
'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base

With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature
lorded

In a triumph of whitest white, —
Above which intervened the night.

But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
Till the heaven of heavens were circum-
flexed,

Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier, —
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then, —
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, "Appear!
"Good were it to be ever here.

"If thou wilt, let me build to thee

"Service-tabernacles three,

"Where, for ever in thy presence,

"In ecstatic acquiescence,

"Far alike from thriftless learning

"And ignorance's undiscerning,

"I may worship and remain!"

Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain

Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under
Until at length it burst asunder

And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentine round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.

He himself with his human air.

On the narrow pathway, just before.

I saw the back of him, no more —

He had left the chapel, then, as I.

I forgot all about the sky.

No face: only the sight

Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,

With a hem that I could recognise.

I felt terror, no surprise;

My mind filled with the cataract,

At one bound of the mighty fact.

"I remember, he did say

"Doubtless that, to this world's end,

"Where two or three should meet and
pray,

"He would be in the midst, their friend;

"Certainly he was there with them!"

And my pulses leaped for joy

Of the golden thought without alloy, 80

That I saw his very vesture's hem.

Then rushed the blood back, cold and
clear,

With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;

And I hastened, cried out while I pressed

To the salvation of the vest,

"But not so, Lord! It cannot be

"That thou, indeed, art leaving me —

"Me, that have despised thy friends!

"Did my heart make no amends?"

"Thou art the love of God — above

"His power, didst hear me place his love, 90

"And that was leaving the world for thee.

"Therefore thou must not turn from me

"As I had chosen the other part!

"Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.

"Our best is bad, nor bears thy test;

"Still, it should be our very best.

"I thought it best that thou, the spirit,

"Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,

"And in beauty, as even we require it — 100

"Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,

"I left but now, as scarcely fited

"For thee: I knew not what I pitied.

"But, all I felt there, right or wrong,

"What is it to thee, who curest sinning?

"Am I not weak as thou art strong?

"I have looked to thee from the beginning,

"Straight up to thee through all the world

"Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled

"To nothingness on either side: 110

"And since the time thou was descried,

"Spite of the weak heart, so have I

"Lived ever, and so fain would die,

"Living and dying, thee before!

"But if thou leavest me —"

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.

When, — have mercy, Lord, on us!

The whole face turned upon me full.

And I spread myself beneath it,

As when the bleacher spreads, to see the it

In the cleansing sun, his wool, —

Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness

Some defiled, discoloured web —

10 So lay I, saturate with brightness.

And when the flood appeared to ebb,

Lo, I was walking, light and swift,

With my senses settling fast and steady-
ing,But my body caught up in the whirl and
drift

Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying

On, just before me, still to be followed,

As it carried me after with its motion:

What shall I say? — as a path were hol-
lowedAnd a man went weltering through the
ocean,

20 Sucked along in the flying wake

Of the luminous water-snake.

Darkness and cold were cloven, as through

I passed, upborne yet walking too.

And I turned to myself at intervals, —

"So he said, so it befalls.

"God who registers the cup

"Of mere cold water, for his sake

"To a disciple rendered up,

"Disdains not his own thirst to slake

30 "At the poorest love was ever offered:

"And because my heart I proffered,

"With true love trembling at the brim,

"He suffers me to follow him

"For ever, my own way, — dispensed

"From seeking to be influenced

"By all the less immediate ways

"That earth, in worships manifold,

"Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,

"The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!"

X.

40 And so we crossed the world and stopped.

For where am I, in city or plain,

Since I am 'ware of the world again?

And what is this that rises propped

With pillars of prodigious girth?

Is it really on the earth,

This miraculous Dome of God?

Has the angel's measuring-rod

Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,

'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,

50 Meted it out, — and what he meted,

Have the sons of men completed?

— Binding, ever as he bade,

Columns in the colonnade

With arms wide open to embrace

The entry of the human race

To the breast of . . . what is it, yon
building,Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?

Now I see; it is no dream;

It stands there and it does not seem;

For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,

And thus I have read of it in books

Often in England, leagues away,

And wondered how these fountains play,

Growing up eternally

Each to a musical water-tree,

Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,

Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,

To the granite lavers underneath.

Liar and dreamer in your teeth!

I, the sinner that speak to you,

Was in Rome this night, and stood, and
knew

Both this and more. For see, for see,

The dark is rent, mine eye is free

To pierce the crust of the outer wall,

And I view inside, and all there, all,

As the swarming hollow of a hive,

The whole Basilica alive!

Men in the chancel, body and nave,

Men on the pillars' architrave,

Men on the statues, men on the tombs

With popes and kings in their porphyry
wombs,

All famishing in expectation

Of the main-altar's consummation.

For see, for see, the rapturous moment

Approaches, and earth's best endowment

Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires

Pant up, the winding brazen spires

Heave loftier yet the baldachin;¹

The incense-gaspings, long kept in,

Supsire in clouds; the organ blatant

Holds his breath and grovels latent,

As if God's hushing finger grazed him,

(Like Behemoth when he praised him)

At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,

Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling

On the sudden pavement strewed

With faces of the multitude.

Earth breaks up, time drops away,

In flows heaven, with its new day

Of endless life, when He who trod,

Very man and very God,

This earth in weakness, shame and pain,

Dying the death whose signs remain

Up yonder on the accursed tree, —

Shall come again, no more to be

Of captivity the thrall,

But the one God, All in all,

King of kings, Lord of lords,

As His servant John received the words,

"I died, and live for evermore!"

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.

"Why sit I here on the threshold-stone

¹ Canopy over the High Altar.

"Left till He return, alone
 "Save for the garment's extreme fold
 "Abandoned still to bless my hold?"
 My reason, to my doubt, replied,
 As if a book were opened wide,
 And at a certain page I traced
 Every record undefaced,
 Added by successive years, —
 The harvestings of truth's stray ears
 Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
 Bound together for belief.
 Yes, I said — that he will go
 And sit with these in turn, I know.
 Their faith's heart beats, though her head
 swims
 Too giddily to guide her limbs,
 Disabled by their palsy-stroke
 From propping mine. Though Rome's
 gross yoke
 Drops off, no more to be endured,
 Her teaching is not so obscured
 By errors and perversities,
 That no truth shines athwart the lies:
 And he, whose eye detects a spark
 Even where, to man's, the whole seems
 dark,
 May well see flame where each beholder
 Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
 But I, a mere man, fear to quit
 The clue God gave me as most fit
 To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
 Because himself discerns all ways
 Open to reach him: I, a man
 Able to mark where faith began
 To swerve aside, till from its summit
 Judgment drops her damning plummet,
 Pronouncing such a fatal space
 Departed from the founder's base:
 He will not bid me enter too,
 But rather sit, as now I do,
 Awaiting his return outside.
 — 'Twas thus my reason straight replied
 And joyously I turned, and pressed
 The garment's skirt upon my breast,
 Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
 My heart cried — What has been abusing
 me
 That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
 Instead of rising, entering boldly,
 Baring truth's face, and letting drift
 Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
 Do these men praise him? I will raise
 My voice up to their point of praise!
 I see the error; but above
 The scope of error, see the love. —
 Oh, love of those first Christian days!
 — Fanned so soon into a blaze,
 From the spark preserved by the trampled
 sect,
 That the antique sovereign Intellect
 Which then sat ruling in the world,
 Like a change in dreams, was hurled
 From the throne he reigned upon:
 You looked up and he was gone.

Gone, his clay and the pen!
 — Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
 Bade her scribes abhor the trick
 Of poetry and rhetoric,
 And exult with hearts set free,
 In blessed imbecility
 Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
 Leaving Sallust incomplete.
 Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
 — Love, while able to acquaint her
 While the thousand statues yet
 Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
 From brush, she saw on every side,
 Chose rather with an infant's pride
 To frame those portents which impart
 Such unction to true Christian Art.
 Gone, music too! The air was stirred
 By happy wings: Terpander's¹ bird
 (That, when the cold came, fled away)
 Would tarry not the wintry day, —
 As more enduring sculpture must,
 Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
 With which they chanced to get a sight
 Of some dear naked Aphrodite
 They glanced a thought above the toes of,
 By breaking zealously her nose off.
 Love, surely, from that music's lingering
 Might have filched her organ-fingering,
 Nor chosen rather to set prayers
 To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
 Love was the startling thing, the new:
 Love was the all-sufficient too;
 And seeing that, you see the rest:
 As a babe can find its mother's breast
 As well in darkness as in light,
 Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
 True, the world's eyes are open now:
 — Less need for me to disallow
 Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled
 Peevish as ever to be suckled,
 Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
 With intermixture of the rattle,
 When she would have them creep, stand
 steady
 Upon their feet, or walk already,
 Not to speak of trying to climb.
 I will be wise another time,
 And not desire a wall between us,
 When next I see a church-roof cover
 So many species of one genus,
 All with foreheads bearing *lover*
 Written above the earnest eyes of them; *IT*
 All with breasts that beat for beauty,
 Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
 In noble daring, steadfast duty,
 The heroic in passion, or in action, —
 Or, lowered for sense's satisfaction,
 To the mere outside of human creatures,
 Mere perfect form and faultless features.
 What? with all Rome here, whence to levy
 Such contributions to their appetite,

¹ Terpander, a famous Lesbian musician and lyric poet, 670 B.C.

With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight

On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding

On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them, —

And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,

When faith has at last united and bound them,

10 They offer up to God for a present?

Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it, —

And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed it,

I will rejoice that God had the preference.

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves:

Too much love there can never be.

And where the intellect devolves

Its function on love exclusively,

I, a man who possesses both,

6 Will accept the provision, nothing loth,

— Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,

That my intellect may find its share.

And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,

And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,

Who, examining the capabilities

Of the block of marble he has to fashion

Into a type of thought or passion, —

Not always, using obvious facilities,

Shapes it, as any artist can,

30 Into a perfect symmetrical man,

Complete from head to foot of the life-size,

Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes —

But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate

A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,

And uses the whole of his block for the bust,

Leaving the mind of the public to finish it,

Since cut it ruefully short he must:

On the face alone he expends his devotion,

He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,

40 — Saying, "Applaud me for this grand notion

"Of what a face may be! As for completing it

"In breast and body and limbs, do that, you!"

All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,

A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,

Could man carve so as to answer volition.

And how much nobler than petty cavils,

Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,

Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,

And believed to begin at the feet was best —

For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night!

My heart beat lighter and more light:

And still, as before, I was walking swift,

With my senses settling fast and steady ing,

But my body caught up in the whirl and drift

Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying

On just before me, still to be followed,

As it carried me after with its motion, —
— What shall I say? — as a path were hollowed,

And a man went weltering through the ocean,

Sucked along in the flying wake

Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

Alone! I am left alone once more —

(Save for the garment's extreme fold

Abandoned still to bless my hold)

Alone, beside the entrance-door

Of a sort of temple, — perhaps a college,

— Like nothing I ever saw before

At home in England, to my knowledge.

The tall old quaint irregular town!

It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . . any

Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;

And this flight of stairs where I sit down,

Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfurt

Or Göttingen, I have to thank for?

It may be Göttingen, — most likely.

Through the open door I catch obliquely

Glimpses of a lecture-hall;

And not a bad assembly neither,

Ranged decent and symmetrical

On benches, waiting what's to see there;

Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,

I also resolve to see with them,

Cautious this time how I suffer to slip

The chance of joining in fellowship

With any that call themselves his friends;

As these folk do, I have a notion.

But hist — a buzzing and emotion!

All settle themselves, the while ascends

By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,

Step by step, deliberate

Because of his cranium's over-freight,

Three parts sublime to one grotesque,

If I have proved an accurate guesser,

The hawk-nosed high-cheek-boned Professor.

I felt at once as if there ran
 A shoot of love from my heart to the man —
 That sallow virgin-minded studious
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
 As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,
 (Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
 And stood, surveying his auditory
 With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial, —
 10 Those blue eyes had survived so much!
 While, under the foot they could not
 smutch,
 Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
 Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
 Till the auditory's clearing of throats
 Was done with, died into a silence;
 And, when each glance was upward sent,
 Each bearded mouth composed intent,
 And a pin might be heard drop half a mile
 hence, —
 He pushed back higher his spectacles,
 20 Let the eyes stream out like lamps from
 cells,
 And giving his head of hair — a hake
 Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity —
 One rapid and impatient shake,
 (As our own Young England adjusts a
 jaunty tie
 When about to impart, on mature diges-
 tion,
 Some thrilling view of the surplice-ques-
 tion)
 — The Professor's grave voice, sweet
 though hoarse,
 Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

XV.

And he began it by observing
 30 How reason dictated that men
 Should rectify the natural swerving,
 By a reversion, now and then,
 To the well-heads of knowledge, few
 And far away, whence rolling grew
 The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
 Commingled, as we needs must think,
 With waters alien to the source;
 To do which, aimed this eve's discourse;
 Since, where could be a fitter time
 40 For tracing backward to its prime
 This Christianity, this lake,
 This reservoir, whereat we slake,
 From one or other bank, our thirst?
 So, he proposed inquiring first
 Into the various sources whence
 'This Myth of Christ is derivable;
 Demanding from the evidence,
 (Since plainly no such life was livable)
 How these phenomena should class?
 50 Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
 Or never was at all, or whether
 He was and was not, both together —
 It matters little for the name,
 So the idea be left the same.

Only, for practical purpose' sake,
 'Twas obviously as well to take
 The popular story, — understanding
 How the ineptitude of the time,
 And the penman's prejudice, expanding
 Fact into fable fit for the clime,
 60 Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated
 it
 Into this myth, this individuum —
 Which, when reason had strained and
 abated it
 Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
 A Man! — a right true man, however,
 Whose work was worthy a man's endeav-
 our:
 Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
 To his disciples, for rather believing
 He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
 As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving 70
 His word, their tradition, — which, though
 it meant
 Something entirely different
 From all that those who only heard it,
 In their simplicity thought and averred it,
 Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:
 For, among other doctrines delectable,
 Was he not surely the first to insist on
 The natural sovereignty of our race? —
 Here the lecturer came to a pausing-
 place.
 And while his cough, like a drouthy piston, 80
 Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
 I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to
 him,
 The vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command.
 This time he would not bid me enter
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,
 90 — One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
 — One, by his soul's too-much presuming
 To turn the frankincense's fuming
 And vapours of the candle starlike
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
 Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
 May poison it for healthy breathing —
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
 Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
 Atom by atom, and leaves you — vacuity. 100
 Thus much of Christ does he reject?
 And what retain? His intellect?
 What is it I must reverence duly?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which tells me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold;
 With this advantage, that the stater
 Made nowise the important stumblle 110

Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?

The stumbling-block, his speech — who
laid it?

How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?

10 Christ's goodness, then — does that fare
better?

Strange goodness, which upon the score

Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more

To God, — should take another view

Of its possessor's privilege,

And bid him rule his race! You pledge

Your fealty to such rule? What, all —

From heavenly John and Attic Paul,

And that brave weather-battered Peter,

20 Whose stout faith only stood completer

For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,

As more his hands hauled nets, they
hardened, —

All, down to you, the man of men,

Professing here at Göttingen,

Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,

Are sheep of a good man! And why?

The goodness, — how did he acquire it?

Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?

Choose which: then tell me, on what ground

30 Should its possessor dare propound

His claim to rise o'er us an inch?

Were goodness all some man's invention,

Who arbitrarily made mention

What we should follow, and whence
flinch, —

What qualities might take the style

Of right and wrong, — and had such
guessing

Met with as general acquiescing

As graced the alphabet erewhile,

When A got leave an Ox to be,

40 No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,¹ —

For thus inventing thing and title

Worship were that man's fit requital.

But if the common conscience must

Be ultimately judge, adjust

Its apt name to each quality

Already known, — I would decree

Worship for such mere demonstration

And simple work of nomenclature,

Only the day I praised, not nature,

50 But Harvey, for the circulation.

I would praise such a Christ, with pride

And joy, that he, as none beside,

Had taught us how to keep the mind

God gave him, as God gave his kind,

Freer than they from fleshly taint:

I would call such a Christ our Saint,

As I declare our Poet, him

¹ Gimel, the Hebrew G, means camel.

Whose insight makes all others dim:

A thousand poets pried at life,

And only one amid the strife

Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall take

His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake —

Though some objected — "Had we seen

"The heart and head of each, what screen

"Was broken there to give them light,

"While in ourselves it shuts the sight,

"We should no more admire, perchance,

"That these found truth out at a glance,

"Than marvel how the bat discerns

"Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns, 70

"Led by a finer tact, a gift

"He boasts, which other birds must shift

"Without, and grope as best they can."

No, freely I would praise the man, —

Nor one whit more, if he contended

That gift of his, from God descended.

Ah friend, what gift of man's does not?

No nearer something, by a jot,

Rise an infinity of nothings

Than one: take Euclid for your teacher: 80

Distinguish kinds: do crownings, cloth-

ings,

Make that creator which was creature?

Multiply gifts upon man's head,

And what, when all's done, shall be said

But — the more gifted he, I ween!

That one's made Christ, this other,
Pilate,

And this might be all that has been, —

So what is there to frown or smile at?

What is left for us, save, in growth

Of soul, to rise up, far past both, 90

From the gift looking to the giver,

And from the cistern to the river,

And from the finite to infinity,

And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII.

Take all in a word: the truth in God's
breast

Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:

Though he is so bright and we so dim,

We are made in his image to witness him:

And were no eye in us to tell,

Instructed by no inner sense, 100

The light of heaven from the dark of hell,

That light would want its evidence, —

Though justice, good and truth were still

Divine, if, by some demon's will,

Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed

Law through the worlds, and right mis-

named.

No mere exposition of morality

Made or in part or in totality,

Should win you to give it worship, there-
fore:

And, if no better proof you will care for, 110

— Whom do you count the worst man upon
earth?

Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth

In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better — true, but my
fact is,
'Tis one thing to know, and another to
practise.

And thence I conclude that the real God-
function

Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and
"heady,

"High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?

Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
"In justice, truth, now understood
"For the first time?" — or, "Believe in
me,

"Who lived and died, yet essentially
"Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's
sake

Conceive of the love, — that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

Can it be that he stays inside?

Is the vesture left me to commune with?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune
with

Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathise
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without throb for Christ's attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast!
If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain
(Though to say so strike the doctors
dumb)

One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.

And how when the Critic had done his
best,

And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table, —
When we looked for the inference and
monition

That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-
hole, —

He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith, — if it be not just
whole,

Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect
it,

Which fact pays damage done reward- 50
ingly,

So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!

"Go home and venerate the myth

"I thus have experimented with —

"This man, continue to adore him

"Rather than all who went before him,

"And all who ever followed after!" —

Surely for this I may praise you, my
brother!

Will you take the praise in tears or laugh-
ter?

That's one point gained: can I compass
another?

Unlearned love was safe from spurning — 60

Can't we respect your loveless learning?

Let us at least give learning honour!

What laurels had we showered upon her,

Girding her loins up to perturb

Our theory of the Middle Verb;

Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar

O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter;

Or curing the halt and maimed 'Iketides,'¹

While we lounged on at our indebted ease:

Instead of which, a tricky demon 70

Sets her at Titus or Philemon!

When ignorance wags his ears of leather

And hates God's word, 'tis altogether;

Nor leaves he his congenial thistles

To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.

— And you, the audience, who might
ravage

The world wide, enviably savage,

Nor heed the cry of the retriever,

More than Herr Heine (before his fever), —

I do not tell a lie so arrant 80

As say my passion's wings are furled up,

And, without plainest heavenly warrant,

I were ready and glad to give the world
up —

But still, when you rub brow meticulous,

And ponder the profit of turning holy

If not for God's, for your own sake solely,

— God forbid I should find you ridiculous!

Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,

Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases
you,

"Christians," — abhor the deist's pravity, — 90

Go on, you shall no more move my gravity

Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse.

I find it in my heart to embarrass them

By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,

And they really carry what they say carries
them.

XIX.

So sat I talking with my mind.

I did not long to leave the door

And find a new church, as before,

But rather was quiet and inclined

To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting 100

¹ *The Suppliants*, a fragment of a play by
Æschylus.

From further tracking and trying and testing.

"This tolerance is a genial mood!"

(Said I, and a little pause ensued).

"One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
"And sees, each side, the good effects of it,

"A value for religion's self,

"A carelessness about the sects of it.

"Let me enjoy my own conviction,

"Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,

10 "Still spying there some dereliction

"Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness!

"Better a mild indifferentism,

"Teaching that both our faiths (though duller

"His shine through a dull spirit's prism)

"Originally had one colour!

"Better pursue a pilgrimage

"Through ancient and through modern times

"To many peoples, various climes,

"Where I may see saint, savage, sage

20 "Fuse their respective creeds in one

"Before the general Father's throne!"

XX.

— 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh!

The black night caught me in his mesh,

Whirled me up, and flung me prone.

I was left on the college-step alone.

I looked, and far there, ever fleeting

Far, far away, the receding gesture,

And looming of the lessening vesture! —

Swept forward from my stupid hand,

30 While I watched my foolish heart expand

In the lazy glow of benevolence,

O'er the various modes of man's belief.

I sprang up with fear's vehemence.

Needs must there be one way, our chief

Best way of worship: let me strive

To find it, and when found, contrive

My fellows also take their share!

This constitutes my earthly care:

God's is above it and distinct.

40 For I, a man, with men am linked

And not a brute with brutes; no gain

That I experience, must remain

Unshared; but should my best endeavour

To share it, fail — subsisteth ever

God's care above, and I exult

That God, by God's own ways occult,

May — doth, I will believe — bring back

All wanderers to a single track.

Meantime, I can but testify

50 God's care for me — no more, can I —

It is but for myself I know;

The world rolls witnessing around me

Only to leave me as it found me;

Men cry there, but my ear is slow:

Their races flourish or decay

— What boots it, while yon lucid way

Loaded with stars divides the vault?

But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life! So viewed, 60
No mere mote's-breadth but teems im-
mense

With witnessings of providence:

And woe to me if when I look

Upon that record, the sole book

Unsealed to me, I take no heed

Of any warning that I read!

Have I been sure, this Christmas-eve,

God's own hand did the rainbow weave,

Whereby the truth from heaven slid

Into my soul? — I cannot bid 70

The world admit he stooped to heal

My soul, as if in a thunder-peal

Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,

I only knew he named my name:

But what is the world to me, for sorrow

Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow

It drops the remark, with just-turned head

Then, on again, 'That man is dead'?

Yes, but for me — my name called, —

drawn

As a conscript's lot from the lap's black 80

yawn,

He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:

Bid out of life by a nod, a glance, —

Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's

chance, —

With a rapid finger circled round,

Fixed to the first poor inch of ground

To fight from, where his foot was found;

Whose ear but a minute since lay free

To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry —

Summoned, a solitary man

To end his life where his life began, 90

From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful

van!

Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held

By the hem of the vesture! —

XXI.

And I caught

At the flying robe, and unrepelled

Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught

With warmth and wonder and delight,

God's mercy being infinite.

For scarce had the words escaped my

tongue,

When, at a passionate bound, I sprung,

Out of the wandering world of rain, 100

Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright

On my bench, as if I had never left it?

— Never flung out on the common at night,

Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft

it,

Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,

Or the laboratory of the Professor!

For the Vision, that was true, I wist,

True as that heaven and earth exist.

There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the self-
same place;
Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed
gall.

She had slid away a contemptuous space:
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistak-
able,

Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in
number,

And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have
happened?

Each friend at my elbow had surely
nudged it;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap
end?

Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
Second, his gesture is too emphatic:

Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatical.
Great news! the preacher is found no

Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye

The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
Great news! the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I bury me,

Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy!
And now that I know the very worst of him,
What was it I thought to obtain at first of
him?

Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
And dare, dispatched to a river-head

For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
And return with another thing in-
stead? —

Saying, "Because the water found
"Welling up from underground,
"Is mingled with the taints of earth,
"While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
"And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
"The world with the leap of a river-
pulse, —

"Therefore I turned from the oozeings
muddy,

"And bring thee a chalice I found, in-
stead:

"See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
"One would suppose that the marble
bled.

"What matters the water? A hope I have
nursed:

"The waterless cup will quench my thirst." 50
— Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straitest
rift!

For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-
seam.

And here, is there water or not, to drink?
I then, in ignorance and weakness,

Taking God's help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meek-
ness

That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind, 60
His All in All appears serene

With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,

The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.

For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer

In the earthen vessel, holding treasure
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;

But the main thing is, does it hold good 70
measure?

Heaven soon sets right all other matters! —

Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,

This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort — can I
doubt? —

Which an empire gained, were a loss
without.

May it be mine! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,

Turned sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings, 80

Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!

Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the
dusk

Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should
increase,

Prophesied of by that horrible husk —
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills

The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more sub-
stantial

Than a fable, myth or personification, — 90

May Christ do for him what no mere man
shall,

And stand confessed as the God of sal-
vation!

Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,

While attacking the choice of my neigh-
bours round,

With none of my own made — I choose
here!

The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
I have done: and if any blames me,

Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful, — 100

Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the
awful, —

I praise the heart, and pity the head of
him,

And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,

Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter

Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May truth shine out, stand ever before us!

10. I put up pencil and join chorus

To Hepzibah Tune, without further
apology,

The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's
Collection,

To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

I.

How very hard it is to be

A Christian! Hard for you and me,
— Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal;

Effecting thus, complete and whole,

20 A purpose of the human soul —

For that is always hard to do;

But hard, I mean, for me and you

To realise it, more or less,

With even the moderate success

Which commonly repays our strife

To carry out the aims of life.

"This aim is greater," you will say,

"And so more arduous every way."

— But the importance of their fruits

30 Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.

"Then, what if it be God's intent

"That labour to this one result

"Should seem unduly difficult?"

Ah, that's a question in the dark —

And the sole thing that I remark

Upon the difficulty, this;

We do not see it where it is,

At the beginning of the race:

40 As we proceed, it shifts its place,

And where we looked for crowns to fall,

We find the tug's to come, — that's all.

II.

At first you say, "The whole, or chief

"Of difficulties, is belief.

"Could I believe once thoroughly,

"The rest were simple. What? Am I

"An idiot, do you think, — a beast?

"Prove to me, only that the least

"Command of God is God's indeed,

50 "And what injunction shall I need

"To pay obedience? Death so nigh

"When time must end, eternity

"Begin, — and cannot I compute,

"Weigh loss and gain together, suit

"My actions to the balance drawn,

"And give my body to be sawn

"Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied

"To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,

"Like any martyr of the list?

"How gladly! — if I make acquist,

"Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,

"Of God's eternity of joy."

III.

— And certainly you name the point

Whereon all turns: for could you joint

This flexile finite life once tight

Into the fixed and infinite,

You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,

With carelessness enough, no doubt —

Would spurn mere life: but when time
brings

To their next stage your reasonings,

Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink

Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV.

You say, "Faith may be, one agrees,

"A touchstone for God's purposes,

"Even as ourselves conceive of them.

"Could he acquit us or condemn

"For holding what no hand can loose,

"Rejecting when we can't but choose?

"As well award the victor's wreath

"To whosoever should take breath

"Duly each minute while he lived —

"Grant heaven, because a man contrived

"To see its sunlight every day

"He walked forth on the public way.

"You must mix some uncertainty

"With faith, if you would have faith be.

"Why, what but faith, do we abhor

"And idolise each other for —

"Faith in our evil or our good,

"Which is or is not understood

"Aright by those we love or those

"We hate, thence called our friends or
foes?

"Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,

"When, turning from the ugly face,

"I found belief in it too hard;

"And she and I have our reward.

"— Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us

"Weak beings, to go using thus

"A touchstone for our little ends,

"Trying with faith the foes and friends; 100

"— But God, bethink you! I would fain

"Conceive of the Creator's reign

"As based upon exacter laws

"Than creatures build by with applause.

"In all God's acts — (as Plato cries

"He doth) — he should geometrise.

"Whence, I desiderate . . ."

V.

I see!

You would grow as a natural tree,

Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
 The world's so perfect and entire,
 Quite above faith, so right and fit!
 Go there, walk up and down in it!
 No. The creation travails, groans —
 Contrive your music from its moans,
 Without or let or hindrance, friend!
 That's an old story, and its end
 As old — you come back (be sincere)
 With every question you put here
 (Here where there once was, and is still,
 We think, a living oracle,
 Whose answers you stand carping at)
 This time flung back unanswered flat, —
 Beside, perhaps, as many more
 As those that drove you out before,
 Now added, where was little need.
 Questions impossible, indeed,
 To us who sat still, all and each
 Persuaded that our earth had speech,
 Of God's, writ down, no matter if
 In cursive type or hieroglyph, —
 Which one fact freed us from the yoke
 Of guessing why He never spoke.
 You come back in no better plight
 Than when you left us, — am I right?

VI.

So, the old process, I conclude,
 Goes on, the reasoning's pursued
 Further. You own, "Tis well averred,
 "A scientific faith's absurd,
 "— Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
 "To serve. So, I would rest content
 "With a mere probability,
 "But, probable; the chance must lie,
 "Clear on one side, — lie all in rough,
 "So long as there be just enough
 "To pin my faith to, though it hap
 "Only at points: from gap to gap
 "One hangs up a huge curtain so,
 "Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
 "Foldless and flat along the wall.
 "What care I if some interval
 "Of life less plainly may depend
 "On God? I'd hang there to the end;
 "And thus I should not find it hard
 "To be a Christian and debarred
 "From trailing on the earth, till furled
 "Away by death. — Renounce the world!
 "Were that a mighty hardship? Plan
 "A pleasant life, and straight some man
 "Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
 "Abundant means to compass it,
 "Shall turn deliberate aside
 "To try and live as, if you tried
 "You clearly might, yet most despise.
 "One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
 "Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
 "In patient hope that, ten years hence,
 "Somewhat completer,* he may say,
 "My list of *coleoptera*!"

* Beetles.

"While just the other who most laughs
 "At him, above all epitaphs
 "Aspires to have his tomb describe
 "Himself as sole among the tribe
 "Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
 "A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
 "So that, subduing, as you want,
 "Whatever stands predominant
 "Among my earthly appetites
 "For tastes and smells and sounds and
 sights,
 "I shall be doing that alone,
 "To gain a palm-branch and a throne.
 "Which fifty people undertake
 "To do, and gladly, for the sake
 "Of giving a Semitic guess,
 "Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

VII.

Good: and the next thing is, — look round
 For evidence enough! 'Tis found,
 No doubt: as is your sort of mind,
 So is your sort of search: you'll find 83
 What you desire, and that's to be
 A Christian. What says history?
 How comforting a point it were
 To find some mummy-scrap declare
 There lived a Moses! Better still,
 Prove Jonah's whale translatable
 Into some quicksand of the seas,
 Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
 That faith might flap her wings an crow
 From such an eminence! Or, no — 90
 The human heart's best; you prefer
 Making that prove the minister
 To truth; you probe its wants and needs,
 And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
 Meet these most aptly, — resolute
 That faith plucks such substantial fruit
 Wherever these two correspond,
 She little needs to look beyond,
 And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
 Or Dionysius Zagrias.¹ 100
 You'll find sufficient, as I say,
 To satisfy you either way;
 You wanted to believe; your pains
 Are crowned — you do: and what re-
 mains?
 "Renounce the world!" — Ah, were it
 done
 By merely cutting one by one
 Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
 How easy were it! — how soon past,
 If once in the believing mood!
 "Such is man's usual gratitude,
 "Such thanks to God do we return,
 "For not exacting that we spurn 114
 "A single gift of life, forego
 "One real gain, — only taste them so
 "With gravity and temperance,
 "That those mild virtues may enhance
 "Such pleasures, rather than abstract —

* A name for the god.

"Last spice of which, will be the fact
 "Of love discerned in every gift;
 "While, when the scene of life shall shift,
 "And the gay heart be taught to ache,
 "As sorrows and privations take
 "The place of joy, — the thing that seems
 "Mere misery, under human schemes,
 "Becomes, regarded by the light
 "Of love, as very near, or quite
 10 "As good a gift as joy before.
 "So plain is it that, all the more
 "A dispensation's merciful,
 "More pettishly we try and cull
 "Briers, thistles, from our private plot,
 "To tar God's ground where thorns are
 not!"

VIII.

Do you say this, or I? — Oh, you!
 Then, what, my friend? — (thus I pursue
 Our parley) — you indeed opine
 That the Eternal and Divine
 20 Did, eighteen centuries ago,
 In very truth . . . Enough! you know
 The all-stupendous tale, — that Birth,
 That Life, that Death! And all, the earth
 Shuddered at, — all, the heavens grew
 black
 Rather than see; all, nature's rack
 And throe at dissolution's brink
 Attested, — all took place, you think,
 Only to give our joys a zest,
 And prove our sorrows for the best?
 30 We differ, then! Where I, still pale
 And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
 Waiting to hear God's voice declare
 What horror followed for my share,
 As implicated in the deed,
 Apart from other sins, — concede
 That if He blacked out in a blot
 My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not
 So very disproportionate!
 Or there might be another fate —
 40 I certainly could understand
 (If fancies were the thing in hand)
 How God might save, at that day's price,
 The impure in their impurities,
 Give licence formal and complete
 To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
 But there be certain words, broad, plain,
 Uttered again and yet again,
 Hard to mistake or overgloss —
 Announcing this world's gain for loss,
 50 And bidding us reject the same:
 The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
 In wickedness, — come out of it!
 Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
 But I who thrill through every nerve
 At thought of what deaf ears deserve —
 How do you counsel in the case?

IX.

"I'd take, by all means, in your place,
 "The safe side, since it so appears:

"Deny myself, a few brief years,
 "The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
 6 "Or cut the plant up by the root.
 "Remember what a martyr said
 "On the rude tablet overhead!
 "I was born sickly, poor and mean,
 "A slave: no misery could screen
 "The holders of the pearl of price
 "From Caesar's envy; therefore twice
 "I fought with beasts, and three times
 saw
 "My children suffer by his law;
 "At last my own release was earned:
 7 "I was some time in being burned,
 "But at the close a Hand came through
 "The fire above my head, and drew
 "My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
 "Sergius, a brother, writes for me
 "This testimony on the wall —
 "For me, I have forgot it all."
 "You say right; this were not so hard!
 "And since one nowise is debarred
 "From this, why not escape some sins
 "By such a method?"

X.

Then begins

To the old point revulsion new —
 (For 'tis just this I bring you to)
 If after all we should mistake,
 And so renounce life for the sake
 Of death and nothing else? You hear
 Each friend we jeered at, send the jeer
 Back to ourselves with good effect —
 "There were my beetles to collect!
 "My box — a trifle, I confess,
 "But here I hold it, ne'ertheless!"
 Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
 And answer) we, the better part
 Have chosen, though 'twere only hope, —
 Nor envy moles like you that grope
 Amid your veritable muck,
 More than the grasshoppers would truck,
 For yours, their passionate life away,
 That spends itself in leaps all day
 To reach the sun, you want the eyes
 To see, as they the wings to rise
 And match the noble hearts of them!
 Thus the contemner we condemn, —
 And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
 Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
 — Not struck enough to overturn
 Our faith, but shake it — make us learn
 What I began with, and, I wis,
 End, having proved, — how hard it is
 To be a Christian!

XI.

"Proved, or not,
 "Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
 "You get of mine, for taking pains
 "To make it hard to me Who gains
 "By that, I wonder? Here I live
 "In trusting ease; and here you drive

"At causing me to lose what most
 "Yourself would mourn for had you lost!"

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
 You leave Saint Paul for Æschylus?
 — Who made his Titan's arch-device
 The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
 The meal of life with, else devoured
 In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
 Before them at the platter's edge!
 If faith should be, as I allege,
 Quite other than a condiment
 To heighten flavours with, or meant
 (Like that brave curry of his Grace)
 To take at need the victuals' place?
 If, having dined, you would digest
 Besides, and turning to your rest
 Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see
 And judge if a mere popery
 Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
 To utter — yes, it shall devolve
 On you to hear as solemn, strange
 And dread a thing as in the range
 Of facts, — or fancies, if God will —
 E'er happened to our kind! I still
 Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
 My face, ought not to speak perhaps;
 Seeing that if I carry through
 My purpose, if my words in you
 Find a live actual listener,
 My story, reason must aver
 False after all — the happy chance!
 While, if each human countenance
 I meet in London day by day,
 Be what I fear, — my warnings fray
 No one, and no one they convert,
 And no one helps me to assert
 How hard it is to really be
 A Christian, and in vacancy
 I pour this story!

XIV.

I commence
 By trying to inform you, whence
 It comes that every Easter-night
 As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
 Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
 Give, through my window-pane, grey
 proofs
 That Easter-day is breaking slow.
 On such a night three years ago,
 It chanced that I had cause to cross
 The common, where the chapel was,
 Our friend spoke of, the other day —
 You've not forgotten, I dare say.
 I fell to musing of the time
 So close, the blessed matin-prime
 All hearts leap up at, in some guise —
 One could not well do otherwise.
 Insensibly my thoughts were bent

Toward the main point; I overwent
 Much the same ground of reasoning
 As you and I just now. One thing
 Remained, however — one that tasked
 My soul to answer; and I asked,
 Fairly and frankly, what might be
 That History, that Faith, to me
 — Me there — not me in some domain
 Built up and peopled by my brain,
 Weighing its merits as one weighs
 Mere theories for blame or praise,
 — The kingcraft of the Lucumons,¹
 Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons, —
 But my faith there, or none at all.
 "How were my case, now, did I fall
 "Dead here, this minute — should I lie
 "Faithful or faithless?" Note that I
 Inclined thus ever! — little prone
 For instance, when I lay alone
 In childhood, to go calm to sleep
 And leave a closet where might keep
 His watch perdue some murderer
 Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
 As good authentic legends tell:
 "He might: but how improbable!
 "How little likely to deserve
 "The pains and trial to the nerve
 "Of thrusting head into the dark!" —
 Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
 Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
 Really lie hid there, and leap out
 At first turn of the rusty key,
 Mine were small gain that she could see,
 Killed not in bed but on the floor,
 And losing one night's sleep the more.
 I tell you, I would always burst
 The door ope, know my fate at first.
 This time, indeed, the closet penned
 No such assassin: but a friend
 Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
 For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
 Who said a good deal that might pass, —
 Heartening, impartial too, it was,
 Judge else: "For, soberly now, — who
 "Should be a Christian if not you?"
 (Hear how he smoothed me down.)
 "One takes
 "A whole life, sees what course it makes
 "Mainly, and not by fits and starts —
 "In spite of stoppage which imparts
 "Fresh value to the general speed.
 "A life, with none, would fly indeed:
 "Your progressing is slower — right!
 "We deal with progress and not flight.
 "Through baffling senses passionate,
 "Fancies as restless, — with a freight
 "Of knowledge cumbersome enough
 "To sink your ship when waves grow
 rough,
 "Though meant for ballast in the hold, —
 "I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
 "The good bark answers to the helm

¹ Heads of Etruscan families.

"Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
 "Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,
 "Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
 "Conceive a doubt, nor understand
 "How senses hornier than his hand
 "Should 'tice the Christian off his guard.
 "More happy! But shall we award
 "Less honour to the hull which, dogged
 "By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
 10 "Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone
 "And stanchions going, yet bears on, —
 "Than to mere life-boast, built to save,
 "And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
 "Make perfect your good ship as these,
 "And what were her performances!"
 I added — "Would the ship reach home!
 "I wish indeed 'God's kingdom come —'
 "The day when I shall see appear
 "His bidding, as my duty, clear
 20 "From doubt! And it shall dawn, that
 day,
 "Some future season; Easter may
 "Prove, not impossibly, the time —
 "Yes, that were striking — fates would
 chime
 "So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
 "The Judgment! — deeper in the spring
 "Than now, however, when there's snow
 "Capping the hills; for earth must show
 "All signs of meaning to pursue
 "Her tasks as she was wont to do
 30 "— The skylark, taken by surprise
 "As we ourselves, shall recognise
 "Sudden the end. For suddenly
 "It comes; the dreadful must be
 "In that; all warrants the belief —
 "At night it cometh like a thief."
 "I fancy why the trumpet blows;
 "— Plainly, to wake one. From repose
 "We shall start up, at last awake
 "From life, that insane dream we take
 40 "For waking now, because it seems.
 "And as, when now we wake from dreams,
 "We laugh, while we recall them, 'Fool,
 "'To let the chance slip, linger cool
 "'When such adventure offered! Just
 "'A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
 "'Aside, a wicked mage to stab —
 "'And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab!'
 "So shall we marvel why we grudged
 "Our labour here, and idly judged
 50 "Of heaven, we might have gained, but
 lose!
 "Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse
 "To plead at all! You speak no worse
 "Nor better than my ancient nurse
 "When she would tell me in my youth
 "I well deserved that shapes uncouth
 "Frighted and teased me in my sleep:
 "Why could I not in memory keep
 "Her precept for the evil's cure?
 "Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
 "You'll wake forthwith!"

XV.

And as I said 61

This nonsense, throwing back my head
 With light complacent laugh, I found
 Suddenly all the midnight round
 One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
 As made up of a multitude
 Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
 Of ripples infinite and black,
 From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
 Like horror and astonishment,
 A fierce vindictive scribble of red 70
 Quick flame across, as if one said
 (The angry scribe of Judgment) "There —
 "Burn it!" And straight I was aware
 That the whole ribwork round, minute
 Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
 Was tinted, each with its own spot
 Of burning at the core, till clot
 Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
 Over all heaven, which 'gan expire
 As fanned to measure equable, — 80
 Just so great conflagrations kill
 Night overhead, and rise and sink,
 Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
 And wither off the blasted face
 Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
 The sharp black ridgy outlines left
 Unburned like network — then, each cleft
 The fire had been sucked back into,
 Regorged, and out it surging flew
 Furiously, and night writhed inflamed, 90
 Till, tolerating to be tamed
 No longer, certain rays world-wide
 Shot downwardly. On every side
 Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
 As if a dragon's nostril split
 And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
 Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,
 Back he inhaled: whereat I found
 The clouds into vast pillars bound,
 Based on the corners of the earth, 100
 Propping the skies at top: a dearth
 Of fire in the violet intervals,
 Leaving exposed the utmost walls
 Of time, about to tumble in
 And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin

The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
 Was too late now. "In very deed,"
 (I uttered to myself) "that Day!"
 The intuition burned away
 All darkness from my spirit too: 110
 There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
 Choosing the world. The choice was
 made;
 And naked and disguiseless stayed,
 And unevadable, the fact.
 My brain held all the same compact
 Its senses, nor my heart declined
 Its office; rather, both combined

To help me in this juncture. I
 Lost not a second, — agony
 Gave boldness: since my life had end
 And my choice with it — best defend,
 Applaud both! I resolved to say,
 "So was I framed by thee, such way
 "I put to use thy senses here!
 "It was so beautiful, so near,
 "Thy world, — what could I then but
 choose

10 "My part there? Nor did I refuse
 "To look above the transient boon
 "Of time; but it was hard so soon
 "As in a short life, to give up
 "Such beauty: I could put the cup
 "Undrained of half its fulness, by;
 "But, to renounce it utterly,
 "— That was too hard! Nor did the cry
 "Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
 "Authentically deep and plain
 20 "Enough to make my lips let go.
 "But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
 "Whether I was not, life's brief while,
 "Endeavouring to reconcile
 "Those lips (too tardily, alas!)
 "To letting the dear remnant pass,
 "One day, — some drops of earthly good
 "Untasted! Is it for this mood,
 "That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
 "Hast made its complement a hell?"

XVII.

30 A final belch of fire like blood,
 Overbroke all heaven in one flood
 Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
 Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
 Then ashes. But I heard no noise
 (Whatever was) because a voice
 Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
 "Time ends, Eternity's begun,
 "And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII.

I looked up; all seemed as before;
 Of that cloud-Tophet overhead
 40 No trace was left: I saw instead
 The common round me, and the sky
 Above, stretched drear and empty
 Of life. 'Twas the last watch of night,
 Except what brings the morning quite;
 When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
 His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
 And gazes on the earth he guards,
 Safe one night more through all its wards,
 50 Till God relieve him at his post.
 "A dream — a waking dream at most!"
 (I spoke out quick, that I might shake
 The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
 "The world gone, yet the world is here?
 "Are not all things as they appear?
 "Is Judgment past for me alone?
 "— And where had place the great white
 throne?
 "The rising of the quick and dead?"

"Where stood they, small and great?
 Who read
 "The sentence from the opened book?" 60
 So, by degrees, the blood forsook
 My heart, and let it beat afresh;
 I knew I should break through the mesh
 Of horror, and breathe presently:
 When, lo, again, the voice by me!

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh brother, 'mid far sands
 The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
 Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-
 blue,
 Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
 Their course, unable to abate 70
 Its paradisaal laugh at fate!
 One morn, — the Arab staggers blind
 O'er a new tract of death, calcined
 To ashes, silence, nothingness, —
 And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
 Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt
 skies
 And prostrate earth, he should surprise
 The imaged vapour, head to foot,
 Surveying, motionless and mute,
 Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt 80
 It vanish up again? — So hapt
 My chance. HE stood there. Like the
 smoke
 Pillared o'er Sodōm, when day broke, —
 I saw Him. One magnific pall
 Mantled in massive fold and fall
 His head, and coiled in snaky swathes
 About His feet: night's black, that bathes
 All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
 Against the soul of blackness there.
 A gesture told the mood within — 90
 That wrapped right hand which bared the
 chin,
 That intense meditation fixed
 On His procedure, — pity mixed
 With the fulfilment of decree.
 Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,
 Who fell before His feet, a mass,
 No man now.

XX.

"All is come to pass.
 "Such shows are over for each soul
 "They had respect to. In the roll
 "Of judgment which convinced mankind 100
 "Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
 "Terror must burn the truth into:
 "Their fate for them! — thou hadst to do
 "With absolute omnipotence,
 "Able its judgments to dispense
 "To the whole race, as every one
 "Were its sole object. Judgment done,
 "God is, thou art, — the rest is hurled
 "To nothingness for thee. This world,
 "This finite life, thou hast preferred, 110
 "In disbelief of God's plain word,
 "To heaven and to infinity.

"Here the probation was for thee,
 "To show thy soul the earthly mixed
 "With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
 "The earthly joys lay palpable, —
 "A taint, in each, distinct as well;
 "The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
 "Above them, but as truly were
 "Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
 "Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
 10 "Twas fitter spirit should subserve
 "The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
 "Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
 "No claim to their inheritance
 "Who chose the spirit's fugitive
 "Brief gleams, and yearned, 'This were to
 live

"Indeed, if rays, completely pure
 "From flesh that dulls them, could
 endure, —
 "Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
 "Our earth, to show how cold and swart
 20 "It lies beneath their fire, but stand
 "As stars do, destined to expand,
 "Prove veritable worlds, our home!"
 "Thou saidst, — 'Let spirit star the dome
 "Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
 "No nook of earth, — I shall not seek
 "Its service further!' Thou art shut
 "Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
 "Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
 "For ever — take it!"

XXI.

"How? Is mine.
 30 "The world?" (I cried, while my soul
 broke
 Out in a transport.) "Hast Thou spoke
 "Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
 "Treasures of wonder and delight,
 "For me?"

XXII.

The austere voice returned, —
 "So soon made happy? Hadst thou
 learned
 "What God accounteth happiness,
 "Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
 "What hell may be his punishment
 "For those who doubt if God invent
 40 "Better than they. Let such men rest
 "Content with what they judged the best.
 "Let the unjust usurp at will:
 "The filthy shall be filthy still:
 "Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
 "Hater, indulge thine enmity!
 "And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
 "Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
 "Do it! Take all the ancient show!
 "The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
 50 "And men apparently pursue
 "Their works, as they were wont to do,
 "While living in probation yet.
 "I promise not thou shalt forget
 "The past, now gone to its account;

"But leave thee with the old amount
 "Of faculties, nor less nor more,
 "Unvisited, as heretofore,
 "By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
 "So, once more, take thy world! Expend
 "Eternity upon its shows, 60
 "Flung thee as freely as one rose
 "Out of a summer's opulence,
 "Over the Eden-barrier whence
 "Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!"

XXIII.

I sat up. All was still again.
 I breathed free: to my heart, balm
 The warmth. "But, all the world!" —
 I said.

I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
 And recollected I might learn
 From books, how many myriad sorts 70
 Of fern exist, to trust reports,
 Each as distinct and beautiful
 As this, the very first I cull.
 Think, from the first leaf to the last!
 Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast
 Exhaustless beauty, endless change
 Of wonder! And this foot shall range
 Alps, Andes, — and this eye devour
 The bee-bird and the aloë-flower?

XXIV.

Then the voice, "Welcome so to rate 80
 "The arras-folds that variegates
 "The earth, God's antechamber, well!
 "The wise, who waited there, could tell
 "By these, what royalties in store
 "Lay one step past the entrance-door.
 "For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
 "This life's munificence? For such
 "As thou, — a race, whereof scarce one
 "Was able, in a million, 90
 "To feel that any marvel lay
 "In objects round his feet all day;
 "Scarce one, in many millions more,
 "Willing, if able, to explore
 "The secreter, minuter charm!
 "— Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
 "Of power to cope with God's intent, —
 "Or scared if the south firmament
 "With north-fire did its wings reflex!
 "All partial beauty was a pledge
 "Of beauty in its plenitude: 100
 "But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
 "Retain it! plenitude be theirs
 "Who looked above!"

XXV.

Though sharp despair's
 Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
 "What matter though my trust were gone
 "From natural things? Henceforth my
 part
 "Be less with nature than with art!
 "For art supplants, gives mainly worth
 "To nature; 'tis man stamps the earth —

"And I will seek his impress, seek
 "The statuary of the Greek,
 "Italy's painting — there my choice
 "Shall fix!"

XXVI.

"Obtain it!" said the voice,

"— The one form with its single act,
 "Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
 "The one face, painters tried to draw,
 "With its one look, from throngs they saw.
 "And that perfection in their soul,
 15 "These only hinted at? The whole,
 "They were but parts of? What each laid
 "His claim to glory on? — afraid
 "His fellow-men should give him rank
 "By mere tentatives which he shrank
 "Smitten at heart from, all the more,
 "That gazers pressed in to adore!
 "Shall I be judged by only these?"
 "If such his soul's capacities,
 "Even while he trod the earth, — think,

now,
 20 "What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
 "With its new palace-brain where dwells
 "Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
 "That crumbled with the transient clay!
 "What visions will his right hand's sway
 "Still turn to forms, as still they burst
 "Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
 "Titanically infantine,
 "Laid at the breast of the Divine?
 "Does it confound thee, — this first page
 30 "Emblazoning man's heritage? —
 "Can this alone absorb thy sight,
 "As pages were not infinite, —
 "Like the omnipotence which tasks
 "Itself to furnish all that asks
 "The soul it means to satiate?
 "What was the world, the starry state
 "Of the broad skies, — what, all displays
 "Of power and beauty intermixed,
 "Which now thy soul is chained betwixt, —
 40 "What else than needful furniture
 "For life's first stage? God's work, be
 sure,

"No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
 "He filled, did not exceed, man's want
 "Of beauty in this life. But through
 "Life pierce, — and what has earth to do,
 "Its utmost beauty's appanage,
 "With the requirement of next stage?
 "Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?
 "Needs must it be, while understood
 50 "For man's preparatory state;
 "Nought here to heighten nor abate;
 "Transfer the same completeness here,
 "To serve a new state's use, — and drear
 "Deficiency gapes every side!
 "The good, tried once, were bad, re-
 tried.

"See the enwrapping rocky niche,
 "Sufficient for the sleep in which
 "The lizard breathes for ages safe:

"Split the mould — and as light would
 chafe

"The creature's new world-widened sense, 6-
 "Dazzled to death at evidence
 "Of all the sounds and sights that broke
 "Innumerable at the chisel's stroke, —
 "So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
 "Was, neither more nor less, enough
 "To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
 "Man reckoned it immeasurable?
 "So thinks the lizard of his vault!
 "Could God be taken in default,
 "Short of contrivances, by you, — 70
 "Or reached, ere ready to pursue
 "His progress through eternity?
 "That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
 "Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
 "To nothingness for ever; so,
 "Has God abolished at a blow
 "This world, wherein his saints were
 pent, —
 "Who, though found grateful and content,
 "With the provision there, as thou,
 "Yet knew he would not disallow 80
 "Their spirit's hunger, felt as well, —
 "Unsated, — not unsatable,
 "As paradise gives proof. Deride
 "Their choice now, thou who sit'st out-
 side!"

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, "Mind, the mind,
 "So miserably cast behind,
 "To gain what had been wisely lost!
 "Oh, let me strive to make the most
 "Of the poor stunted soul, I nipped
 "Of budding wings, else now equipped 90
 "For voyage from summer isle to isle!
 "And though she needs must reconcile
 "Ambition to the life on ground,
 "Still, I can profit by late found
 "But precious knowledge. Mind is best —
 "I will seize mind, forego the rest,
 "And try how far my tethered strength
 "May crawl in this poor breadth and
 length.

"Let me, since I can fly no more,
 "At least spin dervish-like about 100
 "(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
 "I fly) through circling sciences,
 "Philosophies and histories
 "Should the whirl slacken there, then verse
 "Fining to music, shall asperse
 "Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
 "Intoxicate, half-break my chain!
 "Not joyless, though more favoured feet
 "Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
 "The floor. At least earth's bond is 110
 broke!"

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
 "Let me alone! No answer, pray,
 "To this! I know what Thou wilt say!

"All still is earth's, — to know, as much
 "As feel its truths, which if we touch
 "With sense, or apprehend in soul,
 "What matter? I have reached the
 goal —

"Where to does knowledge serve! will
 burn

"My eyes, too sure, at every turn!

"I cannot look back now, nor stake

"Bliss on the race, for running's sake.

"The goal's a ruin like the rest! —

10 "And so much worse thy latter quest,"
 (Added the voice) "that even on earth —

"Whenever, in man's soul, had birth

"Those intuitions, grasps of guess,

"Which pull the more into the less,

"Making the finite comprehend

"Infinity, — the bard would spend

"Such praise alone, upon his craft,

"As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,

"Goes to the craftsman who arranged

20 "The seven strings, changed them and
 rechanged —

"Knowing it was the South that harped.

"He felt his song, in singing, warped;

"Distinguished his and God's part:
 whence

"A world of spirit as of sense

"Was plain to him, yet not too plain,

"Which he could traverse, not remain

"A guest in: — else were permanent

"Heaven on the earth its gleams were
 meant

"To sting with hunger for full light, —

30 "Made visible in verse, despite
 "The veiling weakness, — truth by means
 "Of fable, showing while it screens, —

"Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,

"Was ever fable on outside.

"Such gleams made bright the earth an
 age;

"Now the whole sun's his heritage!

"Take up thy world, it is allowed,

"Thou who hast entered in the cloud!"

XXIX.

Then I — "Behold, my spirit bleeds,

40 "Catches no more at broken reeds, —

"But lilies flower those reeds above:

"I let the world go, and take love!

"Love survives in me, albeit those

"I love be henceforth masks and shows,

"Not living men and women: still

"I mind how love repaired all ill,

"Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth
 amends

"With parents, brothers, children, friends!

"Some semblance of a woman yet

50 "With eyes to help me to forget,
 "Shall look on me; and I will match
 "Departed love with love, attach
 "Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn

"The poorest of the grains of corn

"I save from shipwreck on this isle,

"Trusting its barrenness may smile
 "With happy foodful green one day,
 "More precious for the pains. I pray, —
 "Leave to love, only!"

XXX.

At the word,

The form, I looked to have been stirred 60

With pity and approval, rose

O'er me, as when the headman throws

Axe over shoulder to make end —

I fell prone, letting Him expend

His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice

Smote me. "Is this thy final choice?"

"Love is the best? 'Tis somewhat late!

"And all thou dost enumerate

"Of power and beauty in the world,

"The mightiness of love was curled 70

"Inextricably round about.

"Love lay within it and without,

"To clasp thee, — but in vain! Thy soul

"Still shrunk from Him who made the
 whole,

"Still set deliberate aside

"His love! — Now take love! Well be-
 tide

"Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take

"The show of love for the name's sake,

"Remembering every moment Who,

"Beside creating thee unto 80

"These ends, and these for thee, was said

"To undergo death in thy stead

"In flesh like thine: — so ran the tale.

"What doubt in thee could countervail

"Belief in it? Upon the ground

"That in the story had been found

"Too much love! How could God love
 so?"

"He who in all his works below

"Adapted to the needs of man,

"Made love the basis of the plan, — 90

"Did love, as was demonstrated:

"While man, who was so fit instead

"To hate, as every day gave proof, —

"Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,

"Both could and did invent that scheme

"Of perfect love: 'twould well be seem

"Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,

"Not tally with God's usual ways!"

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly —

"Thou Love of God! Or let me die, 100

"Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!

"Let me not know that all is lost,

"Though lost it be — leave me not tied

"To this despair, this corpse-like bride!

"Let that old life seem mine — no more —

"With limitation as before,

"With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:

"Be all the earth a wilderness!

"Only let me go on, go on,

"Still hoping ever and anon

"To reach one eve the Better Land!" 110

xxxii.

Then did the form expand, expand —
 I knew Him through the dread disguise
 As the whole God within His eyes
 Embraced me.

xxxiii.

When I lived again,
 The day was breaking, — the grey plain
 I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
 Was this a vision? False or true?
 Since then, three varied years are spent,
 And commonly my mind is bent
 10 To think it was a dream — be sure
 A mere dream and distemperature —
 The last day's watching: then the night, —
 The shock of that strange Northern Light
 Set my head swimming, bred in me
 A dream. And so I live, you see,
 Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
 Prefer, still struggling to effect

My warfare; happy that I can
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
 Not left in God's contempt apart,
 20 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
 Thank God, she still each method tries
 To catch me, who may yet escape,
 She knows, — the fiend in angel's shape!
 Thank God, no paradise stands barred
 To entry, and I find it hard
 To be a Christian, as I said!
 Still every now and then my head
 Raised glad, sinks mournful — all grows 30
 drear
 Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
 And think, "How dreadful to be grudged
 "No ease henceforth, as one that's judged.
 "Condemned to earth for ever, shut
 "From heaven!"
 But Easter-Day breaks! But
 Christ rises! Mercy every way
 Is infinite, — and who can say?

MEN AND WOMEN.

184- TO 185-.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM
IN TWELVE BOOKS."

STOP playing, poet! May a brother
speak?

'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's
our art:

Whereas you please to speak these naked
thoughts

Instead of draping them in sights and
sounds.

— True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts
fit to treasure up!

But why such long proclusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?

10 Stark-naked thought is in request enough:
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with
bark,

Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp
to Alp —

Exchange our harp for that, — who
hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want
thought, you think;

Thought's what they mean by verse, and
seek in verse.

Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason — so, you aim at
men.

Quite otherwise! Objects throng our
youth, 'tis true;

20 We see and hear and do not wonder much:
If you could tell us what they mean, in-
deed!

As German Boehme¹ never cared for
plants

Until it happened, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could
speak,

Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk
with him.

That day the daisy had an eye indeed —
Colloquised with the cowslip on such
themes!

We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two

30 While reading prose in that tough book he
wrote

(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our
mind),

We shut the clasps and find life's summer
past.

Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our
loss —

Another Boehme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say. —
Or some stout Mage like him of Halber-
stadt,²

John, who made things Boehme wrote
thoughts about?

He with a "look you!" vents a brace of
rhymes,

And in there breaks the sudden rose her- 40
self,

Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Boehme's book and
all, —

Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart
again!

You are a poem, though your poem's
naught.

The best of all you showed before, believe,
Was your own boy-face o'er the finer
chords

Bent, following the cherub at the top 50
That points to God with his paired half-
moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CON- TEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none
did:

The cloak, that somewhat shone and
showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance. 60
He walked and tapped the pavement with
his cane,

¹ Jacob Boehme, a mystical writer (died 1624),
who turned William Law's head.

² John of Halberstadt, a magician botanist
and a chymist.

- Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
 An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels,
 They turned up, now, the alley by the
 church,
 That leads nowhither; now, they breathed
 themselves
 On the main promenade just at the wrong
 time:
 You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,
 Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
 Against the single window spared some
 house
 Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish
 work, —
 10 Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
 Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the
 chinks
 Of some new shop a-building, French and
 fine.
 He stood and watched the cobbler at his
 trade,
 The man who slices lemons into drink,
 The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
 That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
 He glanced o'er books on stalls with half
 an eye,
 And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
 And broad-edge bold-print posters by the
 wall.
 20 He took such cognisance of men and things,
 If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
 If any cursed a woman, he took note;
 Yet stared at nobody, — you stared at him,
 And found, less to your pleasure than
 surprise,
 He seemed to know you and expect as
 much.
 So, next time that a neighbour's tongue
 was loosed,
 It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
 We had among us, not so much a spy,
 As a recording chief-inquisitor,
 30 The town's true master if the town but
 knew!
 We merely kept a governor for form,
 While this man walked about and took
 account
 Of all thought, said and acted, then went
 home,
 And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
 Who has an itch to know things, he knows
 why,
 And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
 Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a
 touch,
 A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
 As back into your mind the man's look
 came.
 40 Stricken in years a little, — such a brow
 His eyes had to live under! — clear as flint
 On either side the formidable nose
 Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's
 claw.
 Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
 When altogether old B. disappeared
 And young C. got his mistress, — was't
 our friend,
 His letter to the King, that did it all?
 What paid the bloodless man for so much
 pains?
 Our Lord the King has favourites mani-
 fold,
 And shifts his ministry some once a month; 50
 Our city gets new governors at whiles, —
 But never word or sign, that I could hear,
 Notified to this man about the streets
 The King's approval of those letters
 conned
 The last thing duly at the dead of night.
 Did the man love his office? Frowned our
 Lord,
 Exhorting when none heard — "Beseech
 me not!
 "Too far above my people, — beneath me!
 "I set the watch, — how should the people
 know?
 "Forget them, keep me all the more in 60
 mind!"
 Was some such understanding 'twixt the
 two?
 I found no truth in one report at least —
 That if you tracked him to his home, down
 lanes
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
 You found he ate his supper in a room
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the
 wall,
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life
 In that new stuccoed third house by the
 bridge,
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than other- 70
 wise!
 The whole street might o'erlook him as
 he sat,
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's
 back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er
 the cheese
 And fruit, three red halves of starved
 winter-pears,
 Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to
 bed went he.
 My father, like the man of sense he was,
 Would point him out to me a dozen times;
 "St — 'St," he'd whisper, "the Corre- 80
 gidor!"
 I had been used to think that personage
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous
 belt,
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the
 news,
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each
 church its turn,

And memorised the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys;
We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came
to die,

And seen who lined the clean gay garret-
sides

And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving
guard.

Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's
life and death,

Doing the King's work all the dim day
long,

In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust, —
And, now the day was won, relieved at
once!

No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all
the while

How sprucely we are dressed out, you and
I!

A second, and the angels alter that.

Well, I could never write a verse, — could
you?

Let's to the Prado and make the most of
time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGISES.

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, sur-
passed

By none whose temples whiten this the
world.

Through heaven I roll my lucid moon
along;

I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard

Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch
sleek,

And every feathered mother's callow
brood,

And all that love green haunts and loneli-
ness.

Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging
crowns

Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here;

And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends
above,

Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy
ways,

And chase the panting stag, or swift with
darts

Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard
low,

Neglected homage to another god:

Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy dispatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings, 41
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolutes exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous
cord:

Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not 50
swerve.

And Theseus read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal divulged not to his sire the truth.

Now Theseus from Poseidon had ob-
tained

That of his wishes should be granted three,
And one he imprecated straight — "Alive
"May ne'er Hippolutes reach other
lands!"

Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the
prince

Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car 60
That give the feet a stay against the
strength

Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their
speed

Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster
flung

His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull
sprawled

Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them; and the master-chariot-
pole

Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed, 70
Hippolutes, whose feet were trammelled
fast,

Was yet dragged forward by the circling
rein

Which either hand directed; nor they
quenched

The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,

Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny
shell,

Hugh fish-bone wrecked and wreathed
amid the sands

On that detested beach, was bright with
blood

And morsels of his flesh: then fell the
steeds

Head foremost, crashing in their mooned 80
fronts.

Shivering with sweat, each white eye
horror-fixed.

His people, who had witnessed all afar
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutes.

But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
 (Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
 That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
 I, in a flood of glory visible,
 Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
 By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
 Then Theseus lay the woofullest of men,
 And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid
 His face, the murdered prince full pardon
 breathed
 10 To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.
 So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
 Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
 Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot
 life;
 Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
 Should dress my image with some faded
 poor
 Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare
 object
 Such slackness to my worshippers who
 turn
 Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded
 hand,
 As they had climbed Olumpus to report
 20 Of Artemis and nowhere found her
 throne —
 I interposed: and, this eventful night, —
 (While round the funeral pyre the populace
 Stood with fierce light on their black robes
 which bound
 Each sobbing head, while yet their hair
 they clipped
 O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
 And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
 On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
 'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy
 grief —
 As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs
 crashed
 30 Sending a crowd of sparkles through the
 night,
 And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
 Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
 Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
 And splendid gums like gold), — my
 pcter.cy
 Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
 In the thrice-venerable forest here.
 And this white-bearded sage who squeezes
 now
 The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
 Asclepius, whom my radiant brother
 taught
 40 The doctrine of each herb and flower and
 root,
 To know their secret'st virtue and express
 The saving soul of all: who so has soothed
 With lavers the torn brow and murdered
 cheeks,
 Composed the hair and brought its gloss
 again,

And called the red bloom to the pale skin
 back,
 And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
 Even once more, and slacked the sinew's
 knot
 Of every tortured limb — that now he lies
 As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
 These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh 50
 cheer
 Divine presenter of the healing rod,
 Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling
 eye,
 Twines his lithe spires around! I say,
 much cheer!
 Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
 And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-
 nymphs,
 Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and
 leaves
 That strew the turf around the twain!
 While I
 Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's
 crumbs,
 The not-incurious in God's handiwork 60
 (This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
 Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste
 To coop up and keep down on earth a space
 That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's
 soul)
 — To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
 Befall the flesh through too much stress and
 strain,
 Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
 Back and rejoin its source before the 70
 term, —
 And aptest in contrivance (under God)
 To baffle it by deftly stopping such: —
 The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
 Sends greeting (health and knowledge,
 fame with peace)
 Three samples of true snakestone — rarer
 still,
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
 (But fitter, potted fine, for charms than
 drugs)
 And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
 Thus I resume. Who studious in our art 80
 Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and
 bone
 On many a flinty furlong of this land.

Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted
ear;

Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and
beaten me,

And once a town declared me for a spy;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,

10 Since this poor covert where I pass the
night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance
thence

A man with plague-sores at the third de-
gree

Runs 'till he drops down dead. Thou
laughest here!

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip

And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable

In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;

And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
20 Than our school wots of: there's a spider
here

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of
tombs,

Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;
Take five and drop them . . . but who

knows his mind.

The Syrian runagate I trust this to?

His service payeth me a sublimate

Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.

Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,

There set in order my experiences,

Gather what most deserves, and give thee
all —

30 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth¹
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-

disease

Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy —
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at

40 'Zoar —
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price —

Suppose I write what harms not, though
he steal?

40 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.

An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!

For, be it this town's barrenness — or else
The Man had something in the look of

him —

His case has struck me far more than 'tis
worth.

¹ A thick mucilage useful in pharmacy and
trade.

So, pardon if — (lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole
from me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in
mind,

Almost in sight — for, wilt thou have the 50
truth?

The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.

Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania — subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point

Of trance prolonged unduly some three
days:

When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art

Unknown to me and which 'twere well to
know,

The evil thing out-breaking all at once 60
Left the man whole and sound of body in-
deed, —

But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too
wide,

Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might in-

scribe

Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,

(First come, first served) that nothing sub-
sequent

Attaineth to erase those fancy-scraws
The just-returned and new-established soul

Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart 70
That henceforth she will read or these or
none.

And first — the man's own firm conviction
rests

That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
— That he was dead and then restored

to life

By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
— 'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he

did rise.

"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry:
Not so this figment! — not, that such a

fume,

Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life, 80

As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and
all!

For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man — it is one Lazarus a Jew,

Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,

As much, indeed, beyond the common
health

As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug

And bathe the wearied soul and worried
flesh,

And bring it clear and fair, by three days' 90
sleep!

- Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
 Now sharply, now with sorrow, — told the case, —
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
- 10 And that's a sample how his years must go.
 Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure, — can he use the same
 With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things,
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
- Is he not such an one as moves to mirth —
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 20 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here — we call the treasure knowledge,
 say,
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty —
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
- The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 30 Or whether it be little or be much.
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
 Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds —
 'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact, — he will gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results;
- And so will turn to us the bystanders
 40 In ever the same stupor (note this point)
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death, —
 why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
 Or prepermission of the daily craft!
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
- Exasperation, just as like. Demand
 The reason why — "'tis but a word,"
 object —
 "A gesture" — he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
 We both would unadvisedly recite
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which
 ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life —
 (It is the life to lead perforceably)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —
 The spiritual life around the earthly life:
 The law of that is known to him as this,
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze —
 "It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
 80 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
- Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will —
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 90 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please.

He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God
please.

Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbour the real
ground,

His own conviction? Ardent as he is —
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the
old

"Be it as God please" reassureth him.

10 I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid careless-
ness

"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her
march

"To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at
once?"

He merely looked with his large eyes on
me.

The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds — how say I? flowers of the
field —

20 As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they
make.

Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin —
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art

According to some preconceived design,
And happened to hear the land's practitioners
30 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure — and I must hold my
peace!

Thou wilt object — Why have I not
ere this

Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the
source,

Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused, — our learning's fate, — of
wizardry,

40 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the
earthquake fell

(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people — that's
their wont!

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help —

How could he stop the earthquake?

That's their way!

The other imputations must be lies, 50
But take one, though I loathe to give it
thee,

In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he
says?

Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As — God forgive me! who but God him-
self,

Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile! 60
— Sayeth that such an one was born and
lived,

Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his
own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I
know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose
repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in
fact,

In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith — but why all this of what he
saith?

Why write of trivial matters, things of
price

Calling at every moment for remark?

I noticed on the margin of a pool 70
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious
case,

Which, now that I review it, needs must
seem

Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!

Nor I myself discern in what is writ

Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me
with.

Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him 80
thus:

I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:

Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,

The man and I. I send thee what is writ
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked

To this ambiguous Syrian — he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 90

Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and
mine;

Till when, once more thy pardon and
farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too —
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 "Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
 "Thou hast no power nor mayst conceived of mine,
 ' But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 "And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

10 THERE'S heaven above, and night by night
 I look right through its gorgeous roof;
 No suns and moons though e'er so bright
 Avail to stop me: splendour-proof
 I keep the broods of stars aloof:
 For I intend to get to God,
 For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
 For in God's breast, my own abode,
 Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
 I lay my spirit down at last.
 20 I lie where I have always lain,
 God smiles as he has always smiled;
 Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
 Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
 The heavens, God thought on me his child;
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed
 Its circumstances every one
 To the minutest; ay, God said
 This head this hand should rest upon
 Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
 30 And having thus created me,
 Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
 Guiltless for ever, like a tree
 That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
 The law by which it prospers so:
 But sure that thought and word and deed
 All go to swell his love for me,
 Me, made because that love had need
 Of something irreversibly
 Pledged solely its content to be.
 40 Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
 No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!
 I have God's warrant, could I blend
 All hideous sins, as in a cup,
 To drink the mingled venoms up;
 Secure my nature will convert
 The draught to blossoming gladness fast:
 While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt.
 And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,

As from the first its lot was cast.
 For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
 By unexhausted power to bless,
 I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,
 And those its waves of flame oppress,
 Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
 Whose life on earth aspired to be
 One altar-smoke, so pure! — to win
 If not love like God's love for me,
 At least to keep his anger in;
 And all their striving turned to sin.
 Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white 60
 With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
 The martyr, the wan acolyte,
 The incense-swinging child, — undone
 Before God fashioned star or sun!
 God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
 If such as I might understand,
 Make out and reckon on his ways,
 And bargain for his love, and stand,
 Paying a price, at his right hand?

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that 70
 youth's
 Ye praise so. How my soul springs up!
 No bar
 Stayed me — ah, thought which saddens
 while it soothes!
 — Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
 To outburst on your night with all my gift
 Of fires from God: nor would my flesh
 have shrunk
 From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
 And wide to heaven, or, straight like
 thunder, sunk
 To the centre, of an instant; or around
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
 The licence and the limit, space and bound, 80
 Allowed to truth made visible in man.
 And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
 Over the canvas could my hand have
 flung,
 Each face obedient to its passion's law,
 Each passion clear proclaimed without
 a tongue;
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
 A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her
 brood
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its
 place;
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up, 90
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle
 braved, —
 O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
 What did ye give me that I have not
 saved?
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how
 well!)

Of going — I, in each new picture, —
 forth,
 As, making new hearts beat and bosoms
 swell,
 To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South,
 or North,
 Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,
 Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
 Flowers cast upon the car which bore the
 freight,
 Through old streets named afresh from
 the event,
 Till it reached home, where learned age
 should greet
 My face, and youth, the star not yet
 distinct
 10 Above his hair, lie learning at my feet! —
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
 With love about, and praise, till life should
 end,
 And then not go to heaven, but linger
 here,
 Here on my earth, earth's every man my
 friend, —
 The thought grew frightful, 'twas so
 wildly dear!
 But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such
 sights
 Have scared me, like the revels through
 a door
 Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
 This world seemed not the world it was
 before:
 15 Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there
 trooped
 . . . Who summoned those cold faces
 that begun
 To press on me and judge me? Though
 I stooped
 Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
 They drew me forth, and spite of me . . .
 enough!
 These buy and sell our pictures, take
 and give,
 Count them for garniture and household-
 stuff,
 And where they live needs must our
 pictures live
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,
 Partakers of their daily pettiness,
 30 Discussed of, — "This I love, or this I
 hate,
 "This likes me more, and this affects me
 less!"
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at
 whiles
 My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe and
 Saint,
 With the same cold calm beautiful regard —
 At least no merchant traffics in my
 heart;
 The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward

Vain tongues from where my pictures
 stand apart:
 Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine 40
 While, blackening in the daily candle-
 smoke,
 They moulder on the damp wall's traver-
 tine,¹
 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
 So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
 O youth, men praise so, — holds their
 praise its worth?
 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden
 cry?
 Tastes sweet the water with such specks
 of earth?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

[Florentine painter, 1412-1469. See
 Vasari.]

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
 You need not clap your torches to my face.
 Zooks, what's to blame? you think you 50
 see a monk!
 What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the
 rounds,
 And here you catch me at an alley's end
 Where sportive ladies leave their doors
 ajar?
 The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
 Do, — harry out, if you must show your
 zeal,
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him com-
 pany!
 Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll
 take
 Your hand away that's fiddling on my 60
 throat,
 And please to know me likewise. Who
 am I?
 Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
 Three streets off — he's a certain . . .
 how d'ye call?
 Master — a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
 I' the house that caps the corner. Boh!
 you were best!
 Remember and tell me, the day you're
 hanged,
 How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
 But you, sir, it concerns you that your
 knaves
 Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
 Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep 70
 the streets
 And count fair prize what comes into their
 net?
 He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
 Just such a face! Why, sir, you make
 amends.
 Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs
 go

¹ A white limestone.

Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! more
beside!)

And all's come square again. I'd like
his face —

His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern, — for the slave
that holds

John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who
should say)

And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!

10 It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should
see!

Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and
down,

You know them and they take you? like
enough!

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye —
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.

Let's sit and set things straight now, hip
to haunch.

Here's spring come, and the nights one
makes up bands

To roam the town and sing out carnival,
20 And I've been three weeks shut within my
mew,

A-painting for the great man, saints and
saints

And saints again. I could not paint all
night —

Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs
of song, —

*Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*

*Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?*

30 *Flower o' the thyme* — and so on. Round
they went.

Scarce had they turned the corner when
a titter

Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,
— three slim shapes,

And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir
flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it
went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture — a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow,
and so dropped,

And after them. I came up with the fun
40 Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well
met, —

*Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
So so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep*

Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the
flesh,

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake
your head —

Mine's shaved — a monk, you say — the 50
sting's in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died

And father died and le't me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year
or two

On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and
shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went. 60

Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one
hand,

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six
words there,

While I stood munching my first bread
that month:

"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good
fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-
time, —

"To quit this very miserable world?
"Will you renounce" . . . "the mouth-
ful of bread?" thought I;

By no means! Brief, they made a monk 70
of me;

I did renounce the world, its pride and
greed,

Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to — all at eight
years old.

Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing — the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all
round,

And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for" —
that came next.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess. 80
Such a to-do! They tried me with their
books:

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure
waste!

*Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love!*
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the
streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he
desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his pains, —
 Which gentleman processional and fine,
 Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
 Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
 The droppings of the wax to sell again,
 Or holla for the Eight and have him
 whipped, —
 How say I? — nay, which dog bites, which
 lets drop
 His bone from the heap of offal in the
 street, —
 Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp
 alike,
 10 He learns the look of things, and none the
 less
 For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
 I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
 Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
 I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
 Scrawled them within the antiphonary's¹
 marge,
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-
 notes,
 Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and
 B's,
 And made a string of pictures of the world
 Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
 20 On the wall, the bench, the door. The
 monks looked black.
 "Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out,
 d'ye say?"
 "In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a
 lark.
 "What if at last we get our man of parts,
 "We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
 "And Preaching Friars, to do our church
 up fine
 "And put the front on it that ought to be!"
 And hereupon he bade me daub away.
 Thank you! my head being crammed, the
 walls a blank,
 Never was such prompt disemburdening.
 30 First, every sort of monk, the black and
 white,
 I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at
 church,
 From good old gossips waiting to confess
 their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-
 ends, —
 To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting
 there
 With the little children round him in a row
 of admiration, half for his beard and half
 For that white anger of his victim's son
 Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
 40 Signing himself with the other because of
 Christ
 (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
 After the passion of a thousand years)
 Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her
 head,

(Which the intense eyes looked through)
 came at eve
 On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
 Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
 (The brute took growling), prayed, and so
 was gone.
 I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and
 have;
 "Choose, for more's ready!" — laid the
 ladder flat,
 And showed my covered bit of cloister- 50
 wall.
 The monks closed in a circle and praised
 loud
 Till checked, taught what to see and not
 to see,
 Being simple bodies, — "That's the very
 man!
 "Look at the boy who stoops to pat the
 dog!
 "That woman's like the Prior's niece who
 comes
 "To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
 But there my triumph's straw-fire flared
 and fumed;
 Their betters took their turn to see and
 say:
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face
 And stopped all that in no time. "How? 60
 what's here?"
 "Quite from the mark of painting, bless
 us all!
 "Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
 "As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-
 game!
 "Your business is not to catch men with
 show,
 "With homage to the perishable clay,
 "But lift them over it, ignore it all,
 "Make them forget there's such a thing
 as flesh.
 "Your business is to paint the souls of
 men —
 "Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . .
 no, it's not . . .
 "It's vapour done up like a new-born 70
 babe —
 "(In that shape when you die it leaves
 your mouth)
 "It's . . . well, what matters talking,
 it's the soul!
 "Give us no more of body than shows
 soul!
 "Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising
 God,
 "That sets us praising, — why not stop
 with him?
 "Why put all thoughts of praise out of our
 head
 "With wonder at lines, colours, and what
 not?
 "Paint the soul, never mind the legs and
 arms!
 "Rub all out, try at it a second time.

¹ The Roman choir-book.

"Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
 "She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say, —
 "Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
 "Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
 A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,
 And any sort of meaning looks intense
 When all beside itself means and looks nought.
 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint — is it so pretty
 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
 Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
 And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all — (I never saw it — put the case the same —)
 If you get simple beauty and nought else,
 You get about the best thing God invents:
 That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
 "Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
 And so the thing has gone on ever since.
 I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
 You should not take a fellow eight years old
 And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
 I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
 Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
 Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front —
 Those great rings serve more purposes than just
 To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
 And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
 The heads shake still — "It's art's decline, my son!

"You're not of the true painters, great and old;
 "Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
 "Brother Lorenzo¹ stands his single peer:
 "Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
*Flower o' the pine,
 You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!*
 I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
 Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
 They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
 Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
 To please them — sometimes do and sometimes don't;
 For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
 A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints
 A laugh, a cry, the business of the world —
*(Flower o' the peach,
 Death for us all, and his own life for each!)*
 And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
 The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
 And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
 And play the fooleries you catch me at,
 In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
 After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
 Although the miller does not preach to him
 The only good of grass is to make chaff.
 What would men have? Do they like grass or no —
 May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
 Settled for ever one way. As it is,
 You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
 You don't like what you only like too much,
 You do like what, if given you at your word
 You find abundantly detestable.
 For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
 I always see the garden and God there
 A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
 The value and significance of flesh,
 I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward's.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
 But see, now — why, I see as certainly
 As that the morning-star's about to shine,

¹ Lorenzo Monaco, an eminent painter, a monk.

What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
 Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
 His name is Guidi¹ — he'll not mind the monks —
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk —
 He picks my practice up — he'll paint apace,
 I hope so — though I never live so long,
 I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
 10 However, you're my man, you've seen the world
 — The beauty and the wonder and the power,
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
 Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
 — For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
 The mountain round it and the sky above,
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
 These are the frame to? What's it all about?
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
 20 Wondered at? oh, this last of course! — you say.
 But why not do as well as say, — paint these
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
 God's works — paint anyone, and count it crime
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
 "Are here already; nature is complete:
 "Suppose you reproduce her — (which you can't)
 "There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
 For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed
 30 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
 And so they are better, painted — better to us,
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
 God uses us to help each other so,
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
 And trust me but you should, though!
 How much more,

¹ Tommaso Guidi, a painter.

If I drew higher things with the same truth!
 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
 Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
 It makes me mad to see what men shall do
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
 Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
 "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
 Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
 "It does not say to folk — remember matins,
 "Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
 I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
 I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns —
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves
 "Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
 "But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content.
 "The pious people have so eased their own
 "With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
 "We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
 "Expect another job this time next year,
 "For pity and religion grow i' the crowd —
 "Your painting serves its purpose!"
 Hang the fools!
 — That is — you'll not mistake an idle word
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
 Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
 It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
 Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
 And hearken how I plot to make amends.
 I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
 . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
 Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
 They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
 Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,

Lilies and vestments and white faces,
sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at mid-
summer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or
two —
Saint John, because he saves the Floren-
tines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black
and white
The convent's friends and gives them a
long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mis-
take,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well,
all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! —
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck — I'm
the man!
Back I shrink — what is this I see and
hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by
mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all
round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm — "Not so
fast!"
— Addresses the celestial presence, "nay —
"He made you and devised you, after all,
"Though he's none of you! Could Saint
John there draw —
"His camel-hair make up a painting-
brush?
"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
"*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile —
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when
you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being
shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle
off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the
nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I
would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the
church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months
hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,
no lights!

The street's hushed, and I know my own
way back,
Don't fear me! There's the grey begin-
ning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

[Famous painter, died 1531, aged 43.]

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your
heart?

I'll work then for your friend's friend,
never fear,

Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price, 50
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it?
tenderly?

Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow,
Love!

I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it
seems

As if — forgive now — should you let me
sit

Here by the window with your hand in
mine

And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use, 60
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for
this!

Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls
inside.

Don't count the time lost, neither; you
must serve

For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so —
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!

— How could you ever prick those perfect 70
ears,

Even to put the pearl there! oh, so
sweet —

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks — no one's: very dear,
no less.

You smile? why, there's my picture ready
made,

There's what we painters call our har-
mony!

A common greyness silvers everything, —
All in a twilight, you and I alike

— You, at the point of your first pride in 80
me

(That's gone you know), — but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 10 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
 I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
 This chamber for example — turn your head —
 All that's behind us! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art,
 But you can hear at least when people speak:
 20 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 — It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —
 Behold Madonna! — I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know,
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —
 Do easily, too — when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 30 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 — Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, —
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 40 (I know his name, no matter) — so much less!
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt

This love-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men! at a word —
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
 I, painting from myself and to myself,
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain,
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 "Had I been two, another and myself,
 "Our head would have overlooked the world!" No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art — for it gives way;
 That arm is wrongly put — and there again —
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right — that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch —
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore 8
 out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think —
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare —
 Had you, with these the same, but I brought
 a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there
 urged
 "God and the glory! never care for gain.
 "The present by the future, what is that?
 "Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
 "Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
 I might have done it for you. So it seems:
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's
 self;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
 Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too,
 the power —
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the
 end,
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak
 the truth.
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all
 day,
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside;
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it
 all.
 Well may they speak! That Francis,
 that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
 I surely then could sometimes leave the
 ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden
 look, —
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the
 smile,
 One arm about my shoulder, round my
 neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his
 eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire
 of souls
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those
 hearts, —
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my
 work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless . . . but
 I know —

'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my in-
 stinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should
 tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make
 his world.
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your 58
 heart.
 The triumph was — to reach and stay
 there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your
 hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 "The Roman's is the better when you
 prave,
 "But still the other's Virgin was his wife —"
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer
 grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think. 60
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 'To Rafael . . . I have known it all these
 years . . .
 (When the young man was flaming out his
 thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain scrry little scrub
 "Goes up and down our Florence, none
 cares how,
 "Who, were he set to plan and execute
 "As you are, pricked on by your popes and 70
 kings,
 "Would bring the sweat into that brow of
 yours!"
 To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is
 wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
 Give the chalk here — quick, thus the
 line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he specke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?)
 If really there was such a chance, so lost, —
 Is, whether you're — not grateful — but 80
 more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile
 indeed!
 This hour has been an hour! Another
 smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you
 more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star:
 Morello's¹ gone, the watch-lights show the
 wall,

¹ One of the Apennines.

The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
 Come from the window, love, — come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 10 Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
 Must see you — you, and not with me?
 Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me? have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The grey remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 20 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face,
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them — that is, Michel Agnolo —
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor,
 Finish the portrait out of hand — there, there,
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 30 To pay for this same Cousin's freak.
 Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about,
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?
 I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
 I regret little, I would change still less.
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
 The very wrong to Francis! — it is true
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
 40 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
 My father and my mother died of want.
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son
 Paint my two hundred pictures — let him try!
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
 This must suffice me here.* What would one have?
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance —
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
 To cover — the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So — still they overcome
 Because there's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
 Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
 Nephews — sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well —
 She, men would have to be your mother once,
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
 Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
 Hours and long hours in the dead night,
 I ask
 "Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
 Saint, Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
 — Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence

One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent
 seats,
 And up into the aery dome where live
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
 With those nine columns round me, two
 and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm
 stands:
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the
 ripe
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty
 pulse.
 — Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-
 stone,
 Put me where I may look at him! True
 peach,
 Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
 Draw close: that conflagration of my
 church
 — What then? So much was saved if
 aught were missed!
 My sons, ye would not be my death? Go
 dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-
 press stood,
 Drop water gently till the surface sink,
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not,
 I! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas,
 all,
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my
 knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both his
 hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not chose but see and
 burst!
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is
 he?
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black —
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How
 else
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come be-
 neath?
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and
 perchance
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
 Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment
 off,
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I
 know

Ye mark me not! What do they whisper
 thee,
 Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye
 hope
 To revel down my villas while I gasp
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy traver-
 tine
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top
 chuckles at!
 Nay, boys, ye love me — all of jasper,
 then!
 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I
 grieve.
 My bath must needs be left behind, alas! 50
 One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
 There's plenty jasper somewhere in the
 world —
 And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manu-
 scripts,
 And mistresses with great smooth marbly
 limbs?
 — That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every
 word,
 No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second
 line —
 Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his
 need!
 And then how I shall lie through centuries, 60
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
 And see God made and eaten all day long,
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-
 smoke!
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone
 can point,
 And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's- 70
 work:
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange
 thoughts
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
 About the life before I lived this life,
 And this life too, popes, cardinals and
 priests,
 Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
 Your tall pale mother with her talking
 eyes,
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
 And marble's language, Latin pure, dis-
 creet,
 — Aha, *ELUCESCEBAT* quoth our friend?
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! 80
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
 My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished
 frieze,

Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase

With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,¹
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus
down,

To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave
me, there!

For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death — ye wish it — God, ye wish it!
Stone —

10 Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares
which sweat

As if the corpse they keep were oozing
through —

And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs —
Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for
peace,

That I may watch at leisure if he leers —
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

20 No more wine? then we'll push back
chairs and talk.

A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his
heart!

I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk
rosettes,

Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church

30 Cost us a little — oh, they pay the price,
You take me — amply pay it! Now, we'll
talk

So you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.

No deprecation, — nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you
know,

I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together? — truth
that peeps

Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the
time:

40 Truth's break of day! You do despise me
then.

And if I say, "despise me," — never fear!
I know you do not in a certain sense —

* A bust ending in a square block of stone, like
those of the god Terminus.

Not in my arm-chair, for example: here.
I well imagine you respect my place
(*Status, entourage*, worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value — very much indeed:
— Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once —
You'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years

to come,
Hints of the bishop, — names me — that's
enough:

"Blougram? I knew him" — (into it you
slide)

"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi
Day,

"All alone, we two; he's a clever man:

"And after dinner, — why, the wine you
know, —

"Oh, there was wine, and good! — what
with the wine . . .

"Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!

"He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had
seen

"Something of mine he relished, some
review:

"He's quite above their humbug in his
heart,

"Half-said as much, indeed — the thing's
his trade.

"I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times:
"How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"

Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It's fair give and
take;

You have had your turn and spoken your
home-truths:

The hand's mine now, and here you follow.
suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact
stays —

You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's: you would not be I. ;

You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,

Count D'Orsay, — so you did what you
preferred,

Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot
help,

Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,

You loosed your mind, were whole and sole
yourself.

— That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth

Never be based! for say they make me
Pope —

(They can't — suppose it for our argu-
ment!)

Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've
reached

My height, and not a height which pleases
you:

An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say

It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor on a stage played
Death,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinsel-
delt dart,
And called himself the monarch of the
world;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift him-
self,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch
a Pope

10 At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just
now.
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realised
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realise one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be
all,

20 I would be merely much: you beat me
there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken
why!

The common problem, yours, mine, every
one's,

Is — not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be, — but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing
more,

30 May lead within a world which (by your
leave)

Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealise away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile!

We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-
room.

Now for our six months' voyage — how
prepare?

You come on shipboard with a landsman's
list

10 Of things he calls convenient: so they are!

An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Lipsic, fill the next:

Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it
makes!

And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
"Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting
glow

Hang full in face of one where'er one roams, 50
Since he more than the others brings with
him

Italy's self, — the marvellous Modenese! —
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
— Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is't
the name?

The captain, or whoever's master here —
You see him screw his face up; what's his
cry

Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet
square!"

If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accord-
ingly —

And if, in pique because he overhauls 60
Your Jerome, piano, bath, you come on
board

Bare — why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas
over,

You peep up from your utterly naked
boards

Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler
jug —

Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)
And mortified you mutter "Well and
good;

"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture; 70
"Tis stout and proper, and there's store of
it:

"Though I've the better notion, all agree,
"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the car-
penter,

"Neat ship-shape fixings and contriv-
ances —

"I would have brought my Jerome, frame
and all!"

And meantime you bring nothing: never
mind —

You've proved your artist-nature: what
you don't

You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the start-
ing place.

See my way: we're two college friends, 80
suppose.

Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his
work, —

Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise!
What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop
too?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't
and can't;

(Not stately, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what
remains

But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:
And if I do not frankly say as much,
10 The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not
believe

If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.

You're wrong — I mean to prove it in due
time.

Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve —
(To you, and over the wine). Our
dogmas then

With both of us, though in unlike degree,
20 Missing full credence — overboard with
them!

I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with
yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I
think!

In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
30 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us? — the problem
here.

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-
touch,

A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's
death,

A chorus-ending from Euripides, —
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic
ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base
again, —

40 The grand Perhaps! We look on help-
lessly.

There the old misgivings, crooked ques-
tions are —

This good God, — what he could do, if he
would,

Would, if he could — then must have done
long since:

If so, when, where and how? some way
must be, —

Once feel about, and soon or late you hit

Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the
Life?"

— That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road;
While, if he views it from the waste itself, 50
Up goes the line there, plain from base to
brow,

Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break
or two

Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)

What if the breaks themselves should prove
at last

The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is
faith?

And so we stumble at truth's very test!
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith, 60
For one of faith diversified by doubt:

We called the chess-board white, — we call
it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end's no worse,
at least

"We've reason for both colours on the
board:

"Why not confess then, where I drop the
faith

"And you the doubt, that I'm as right as
you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this
being so,

And both things even, — faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice, — we'll proceed a
step,

Returning to our image, which I like. 70

A man's choice, yes — but a cabin-
passenger's —

The man made for the special life o' the
world —

Do you forget him? I remember though!
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy — they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole
course,

Begins at its beginning. See the world 80
Such as it is, — you made it not, nor I;

I mean to take it as it is, — and you,
Not so you'll take it, — though you get
nought else.

I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me
fruit

In power, peace, pleasantness and length
of days.

I find that positive belief does this.
 For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
 — For you, it does, however? — that, we'll try!

"Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
 Induce the world to let me peaceably,
 Without declaring at the outset, "Friends,
 "I absolutely and peremptorily
 "Believe!" — I say, faith is my waking life:

One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
 We know, but waking's the main point with us,
 And my provision's for life's waking part.
 Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
 All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
 And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
 Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
 The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
 What's midnight doubt before the day-spring's faith?

You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
 That recognise the night, give dreams their weight —

To be consistent you should keep your bed,
 Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
 For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
 And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
 Live through the day and bustle as you please.

And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
 To unbelieve as I to still believe?
 Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
 Bed-ridden, — and its good things come to me.

Its estimation, which is half the fight,
 That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
 The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
 Come, come, it's best believing, if we may;
 You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
 If once we choose belief, on all accounts
 We can't be too decisive in our faith,
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
 To suit the world which gives us the good things.

In every man's career are certain points
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
 The world detects him clearly, if he dare
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.
 He may care little or he may care much
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
 Since various theories of life and life's
 Success are extant which might easily
 Comport with either estimate of these;
 And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool

Because his fellow would choose otherwise:
 We let him choose upon his own account 50
 So long as he's consistent with his choice.
 But certain points, left wholly to himself,
 When once a man has arbitrated on,
 We say he must succeed there or go hang.
 Thus, he should wed the woman he loves
 most
 Or needs most, whatso'er the love or need —
 For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
 Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
 The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
 Whate'er the process of conviction was: 6
 For nothing can compensate his mistake
 On such a point, the man himself being judge:
 He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith
 I happened to be born in — which to teach
 Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
 As best and readiest means of living by;
 The same on examination being proved
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
 And absolute form of faith in the whole 70
 world —
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms
 For working on the world. Observe, my friend!

Such as you know me, I am free to say,
 In these hard latter days which hamper one,
 Myself — by no immoderate exercise
 Of intellect and learning, but the tact
 To let external forces work for me,
 — Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
 Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
 Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world 80
 And make my life an ease and joy and pride;
 It does so, — which for me's a great point gained,
 Who have a soul and body that exact
 A comfortable care in many ways.
 There's power in me and will to dominate
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
 In many ways I need mankind's respect,
 Obedience, and the love that's born of fear:
 While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
 A toy of soul, a titillating thing, 90
 Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
 The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
 I must take what men offer, with a grace
 As though I would not, could I help it, take!
 An uniform I wear though over-rich —

Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;

No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore! now folk kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the
Church's hand.

Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
10 But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain-enough:
Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead
beasts' lives!

Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
The tailless man exceeds me: but being
tailed

20 I'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their
haunches up.

My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God
made.

Or—our first simile—though you prove
me doomed

To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should
strive

To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient
straw.

30 But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so
fast

I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can
find

In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise per-
haps, yet knows

40 One wise man's verdict outweighs all the
fools'—

Would like the two, but, forced to choose,
takes that.

I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of
sense

Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,

And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither
case,

Withhold their voices though I look their
way:

Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—
what's its name?)

While the mad houseful's plaudits near
outbang

His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the
wreaths

Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer
here—

That even your prime men who appraise
their kind

Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple
self,

Confuse themselves. You see lads walk
the street

Sixty the minute; what's to note in that? 6
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall,
yet stands!

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of
things.

The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new
French books—

We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then,
keep the line

Before your sages,—just the men to shrink 7
From the gross weights, coarse scales and
labels broad

You offer their refinement. Fool or knave.
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights
between?

So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve,
you'll find,

Profess themselves indignant, scandalised
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that's Schelling's
way!

It's through my coming in the tail of time, 8
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.

Had I been born three hundred years ago
They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram
of course believes;"

And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of
course."

But now, "He may believe; and yet, and
yet

"How can he?" All eyes turn with
interest.

Whereas, step off the line on either side—

You, for example, clever to a fault,
 The rough and ready man who write apace,
 Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps
 even less —
 You disbelieve! Who wonders and who
 cares?
 Lord So-and-so — his coat bedropped with
 wax,
 All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
 Brave with the needlework of Noodle-
 dom —
 Believes! Again, who wonders and who
 cares?
 But I, the man of sense and learning too,
 The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
 I, to believe at this late time of day!
 Enough; you see, I need not fear con-
 tempt.

— Except it's yours! Admire me as
 these may,
 You don't. But whom at least do you
 admire?
 Present your own perfection, your ideal,
 Your pattern man for a minute — oh,
 make haste,
 Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
 Concede the means; allow his head and
 hand,
 (A large concession, clever as you are)
 Good! In our common primal element
 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know —
 We're still at that admission, recollect!)
 Where do you find — apart from, towering
 o'er
 The secondary temporary aims
 Which satisfy the gross taste you de-
 spise —
 Where do you find his star? — his crazy
 trust
 God knows through what or in what? it's
 alive
 And shines and leads him, and that's all
 we want.
 Have we aught in our sober night shall
 point
 Such ends as his were, and direct the means
 Of working out our purpose straight as his,
 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
 With after-care to justify the same?
 — Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve —
 Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light
 away!
 What's the vague good o' the world, for
 which you dare
 With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
 We neither of us see it! we do see
 The blown-up millions — spatter of their
 brains
 And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
 In that bewildering entanglement
 Of horrible eventualities
 Past calculation to the end of time!
 Can I mistake for some clear word of God

(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
 His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
 "The State, that's I," quack-nonsense
 about crowns,
 And (when one beats the man to his last
 hold)
 A vague idea of setting things to rights,
 Policing people efficaciously,
 More to their profit, most of all to his own;
 The whole to end that dismaldest of ends
 By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the
 Church,
 And resurrection of the old *régime*?
 Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
 Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
 No: for, concede me but the merest chance
 Doubt may be wrong — there's judgment,
 life to come!
 With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt
 proves right?
 This present life is all? — you offer me
 Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
 That wedding an archduchess, wearing
 lace,
 And getting called by divers new-coined
 names,
 Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
 Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
 Therefore I will not.

Take another case;
 Fit up the cabin yet another way.
 What say you to the poets? shall we write
 Hamlet, Othello — make the world our
 own,
 Without a risk to run of either sort?
 I can't! — to put the strongest reason first.
 "But try," you urge, "the trying shall
 suffice;
 "The aim, if reached or not, makes great
 the life:
 "Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to
 fate!"
 Spare my self-knowledge — there's no
 fooling me!
 If I prefer remaining my poor self,
 I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
 If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
 Why should I try to be what now I am?
 If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable, —
 His power and consciousness and self-de-
 light
 And all we want in common, shall I find —
 Trying for ever? while on points of taste
 Wherewith, to speak it humbly he and I,
 Are dowered alike — I'll ask you, I or he,
 Which in our two lives realises most?
 Much, he imagined — somewhat, I possess.
 He had the imagination; stick to that!
 Let him say, "In the face of my soul's
 works
 "Your world is worthless and I touch it not
 "Lest I should wrong them" — I'll with-
 draw my plea.

But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment
there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford
town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of
things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
10 Why then should I who play that person-
age,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy
made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like
mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to
reach)
He would have run the whole race back,
forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write
plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's
best!
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at
home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
20 Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman
walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold (he never did).
— Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's
top —
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of
these;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are:
I've gained them — crossed St. Gothard
last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for
that?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and
myself,
30 And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had them when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have them also in my sense.
We play one game; I send the ball afloat
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and
high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and
get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
40 And hit — his Stratford house, a coat of
arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and
wool, —
While I receive heaven's incense in my
nose

And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the
game?

Believe — and our whole argument
breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very
breath,
The fact's the same, — belief's fire, once in
us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron — this turns
steel,
That burns to ash — all's one, fire proves
its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther — that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God,
he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be
mine?
If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:
And if he did not altogether — well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss
should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the
facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the
world —
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told
it first
It could not owe a farthing, — not to him
More than Saint Paul! 'twould press its
pay, you think?
Then add there's still that plaguy hun-
dredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is
run —
For what gain? not for Luther's, who
secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his
life,
Supposing death a little altered things.
"Ay, but since really you lack faith,"
you cry,
"You run the same risk really on all sides,
"In cool indifference as bold unbelief."
"As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul
and him.

"It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
 "No more able to do faith's work
 "Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.

Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.

We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:

I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,

If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?

By life and man's free will, God gave for that!

To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:

That's our one act, the previous work's his own.

You criticise the soul? It reared this tree —

This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!

What matter though I doubt at every pore,

Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day,

Doubts at the very bases of my soul

In the grand moments when she probes her self —

o If finally I have a life to show,

The thing I did, brought out in evidence

Against the thing done to me underground

By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?

I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?

All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?

It is the idea, the feeling and the love,

God means mankind should strive for and show forth

Whatever be the process to that end, —

And not historic knowledge, logic sound,

And metaphysical acumen, sure!

"What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said,

Like you this Christianity or not?

It may be false, but will you wish it true?

Has it your vote to be so if it can?

Trust you an instinct silenced long ago

That will break silence and enjoin you love

What mortified philosophy is hoarse,

And all in vain, with bidding you despise?

If you desire faith — then you've faith enough:

What else seeks God — nay, what else seek ourselves?

You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,

On hearsay; it's a favourable one:

"But still" (you add), "there was no such good man,

"Because of contradiction in the facts.

"One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,

"This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him

"I see he figures as an Englishman."

Well, the two things are reconcilable.

But would I rather you discovered that, Subjoining — "Still, what matter though 53 they be?

"Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed — you know not what you ask!

Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,

Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much

The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.

It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.

Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:

I say it's meant to hide him all it can,

And that's what all the blessed evil's for.

Its use in Time is to environ us,

Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough

Against that sight till we can bear its stress.

Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain

And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart

Less certainly would wither up at once

Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.

But time and earth case-harden us to live;

The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child

Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,

Plays on and grows to be a man like us, 70

With me, faith means perpetual unbelief

Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot

Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.

Or, if that's too ambitious, — here's my box —

I need the excitation of a pinch

Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose

Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.

"Leave it in peace" advise the simple folk:

Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,

Say I — let doubt occasion still more faith! 80

You'll say, once all believed, man,

woman, child,

In that dear middle-age these noodles

praise.

How you'd exult if I could put you back

Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,

Geology, ethnology, what not,

(Greek endings, each the little passing-

bell

That signifies some faith's about to die),

And set you square with Genesis again, —

When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe — and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

10 No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops
O'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet — both tug —
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely:
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.

What are the laws of nature, not to bend
20 If the Church bid them? — brother Newman asks.

Up with the Immaculate Conception, then —
On to the rack with faith! — is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, "It can't be — yet it shall!

"Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?

"Low things confound the high things!"
and so forth.

That's better than acquitting God with grace

As some folk do. He's tried — no case is proved,

Philosophy is lenient — he may go!

30 You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete

But men believe still: ay, but who and where?

King Bomba's lazzaroni fester yet

The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;

But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint

Believes God watches him continually,

As he believes in fire that it will burn,

Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,

Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? "No," he smiles;

40 "These laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is — yes, my doubt is great,
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.

I have read much, thought much, experienced much,

Yet would die rather than avow my fear

The Naples' liquefaction may be false,

When set to happen by the palace-clock

According to the clouds or dinner-time.

I hear you recommend, I might at least

Eliminate, declassify my faith

Since I adopt it; keeping what I must

And leaving what I can — such points as this.

I won't — that is, I can't throw one away.

Supposing there's no truth in what I hold

About the need of trial to man's faith,

Still, when you bid me purify the same,

To such a process I discern no end.

Clearing off one excrescence to see two,

There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,

That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!

First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last

But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?

Experimentalise on sacred things!

I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain

To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.

The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste

As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,

Nor see more danger in it, — you retort.

Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise

When we consider that the steadfast hold

On the extreme end of the chain of faith

Gives all the advantage, makes the difference

With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule;

We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.

So, other matters equal, we'll revert

To the first problem — which, if solved my way

And thrown into the balance, turns the scale —

How we may lead a comfortable life,

How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time

How narrowly and grossly I view life,

Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule

The masses, and regard complacently

"The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.

I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:

No prejudice to what next world may
prove,

Whose new laws and requirements, my
best pledge

To observe then, is that I observe these
now

Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.

Let us concede (gratuitously though)

Next life relieves the soul of body, yields

Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,

Why lose this life if the meantime, since
its use

May be to make the next life more intense?

10 Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)

Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still

Losing true life for ever and a day

Through ever trying to be and ever being —

In the evolution of successive spheres —

Before its actual sphere and place of life,

Halfway into the next, which having

reached,

It shoots with corresponding foolery

Halfway into the next still, on and off!

10 As when a traveller, bound from North

to South,

Scouts fur in Russia: what's its use in

France?

In France spurns flannel: where's its

need in Spain?

In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for

Algiers!

Lines goes next, and last the skin itself,

A superfluity at Timbuctoo.

When, through his journey, was the fool

at ease?

I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this

world,

I take and like its way of life; I think

My brothers, who administer the means,

Live better for my comfort — that's good

too;

And God, if he pronounce upon such life,

Approves my service, which is better still.

If he keeps silence, — why, for you or me

Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's

"Times,"

What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life

we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you de-

clare, —

All special-pleading done with — truth is

truth,

And justifies itself by undreamed ways.

You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,

To say so, act up to our truth perceived

However feebly. Do then, — act away!

'Tis there I'm on the watch for you. How

one acts

Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:

And how you'll act is what I fain would

see

If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's
scheme

As I of mine, live up to its full law

Since there's no higher law that counter-
checks.

Put natural religion to the test

You've just demolished the revealed with 50
— quick,

Down to the root of all that checks your will

All prohibition to lie, kill and thief,

Or even to be an atheistic priest!

Suppose a pricking to incontinence —

Philosophers deduce you chastity

Or shame, from just the fact that at the
first

Whoso embraced a woman in the field,

Threw club down and forewent his brains
beside,

So, stood a ready victim in the reach

Of any brother savage, club in hand; 60

Hence saw the use of going out of sight

In wood or cave to prosecute his loves:

I read this in a French book t'other day.

Does law so analysed coerce you much?

Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters

end,

But you who reach where the first thread

begins,

You'll soon cut that! — which means you

can, but won't,

Through certain instincts, blind, un-

reasoned-out,

You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,

But there they are, and so you let them 70
rule.

Then, friend, you seem as much a slave

as I,

A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,

Without the good the slave expects to get,

In case he has a master after all!

You own your instincts? why, what else do

I,

Who want, am made for, and must have a

God

Ere I can be aught, do aught? — no mere

name

Want, but the true thing with what proves

its truth,

To wit, a relation from that thing to me,

Touching from head to foot — which 80
touch I feel,

And with it take the rest, this life of ours!

I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

— Not as I state it, who (you please

subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names:

While, to your mind, remains another way

For simple men: knowledge and power

have rights,

But ignorance and weakness have rights

too.

There needs no crucial effort to find truth

If here or there or anywhere about:

We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,

And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least

The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.

Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying? I say, I see all,

And swear to each detail the most minute
10 In what I think a Pan's face — you, mere cloud:

I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,

For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all.

You take the simple life — ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face) —

And leaving quiet what no strength can move,

And which, who bids you move? who has the right?

I bid you: but you are God's sheep, not mine:

"*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find
20 In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,

Much you don't eat because your maw objects,

Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock

Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them;

Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,

You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats

And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears

30 Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;

Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:

And thus you graze through life with not one lie,

And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat — which means you are not I —

Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill

Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward

By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir; my age is double yours.

40 At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,

What now I should be — as, permit the word,

I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.

We both have minds and bodies much alike:

In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,

My daily bread, my influence and my state?

You're young. I'm old; you must be old one day;

Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch —

Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring —
With much beside you know or may conceive?

Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,

While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase

Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you — the highest honour in your life,

The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,

Is — dining here and drinking this last glass

I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power

And social influence, worldly worth in short,

Judge what's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,

Hint secrecy on one of all these words!
You're shrewd and know that should you

publish one
The world would brand the lie — my

enemies first,
Who'd sneer — "the bishop's an arch-

hypocrite
"And knave perhaps, but not so frank a

fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my

ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such

smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself —

My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.

What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?

Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf

mine —
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,

A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this

war,
An artist whose religion is his art —

I should have nothing to object: such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,

Their druggets' worth my purple, they
beat me.
But you, — you're just as little those as I —
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet — which
view you'll print —
Meantime the best you have to show being
still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens, — what's its
name?
"The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
"Limned after dark!" it made me laugh,
I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in
ten pounds.
— Success I recognise and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three
words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite
enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New
York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's
wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches! be the first
"Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"
Or better simply say, "The Outward-
bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in my
teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked
broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue — not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least — despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his
hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non — (the deuce knows
what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his
plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out a
mind
Long crumpled, till creased consciousness
lay smooth.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half
he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentary purposes,

He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because
new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way
twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's
weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mis-
take
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these, — not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by
wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I justify
myself
"On every point where cavillers like this
"Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of
fence,
"I close, he's worsted, that's enough for
him.
"He's on the ground: if ground should
break away
"I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
"Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
"His ground was over mine and broke the
first:
"So, let him sit with me this many a year!"
He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the "Out-
ward-bound"
Another way than Blougram's purpose
was:
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia — there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said" —

[An imaginary person. The poet quoted by
St. Paul was Aratus, a native of Tarsus.]

CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave
lisps "Greece") —
To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unladen
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:

And one white she-slave from the group
dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-
work

Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white
hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!

- 10 For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad
enough

For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower, —
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good ac-
claim

- 20 Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect, —
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's
sake —

Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building
hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to the
East:

The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the
sun.

For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,
speak

- 30 Thy great words, and describe thy royal
face —

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the
most,

Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me
here.

It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.

That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine, — and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark

- 40 When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their
net.

The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The *Pœcile*,¹ o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine
too.

¹ The famous painted Porch on the Agora in Athens.

I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music, — why, I have combined the
moods,

Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Mar-
vel not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more com-
posite,

Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time, —
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age, 60
Great in his way — not ours, nor meant
for ours.

And ours is greater, had we skill to know:
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements
here

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all, —
How shall a certain part, pronounced
complete,

Endure effacement by another part? 70
Was the thing done? — then, what's to
do again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid —
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.

So, first the perfect separate forms were
made,

The portions of mankind; and after, so, 80
Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men, —
In such a synthesis the labour ends.

Now mark me! those divine men of old
time

Have reached, thou sayest well, each at
one point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more
than reach?

It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere, 90
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the
rest

In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied
sphere,

Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height — and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to
Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in our life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown,
Piccemeal or in succession; — showed, I
say,

The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image, — might we hear
The judgment which should give the due
to each,

Show where the labour lay and where the
ease,

And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream: — but no dream, let us
hope,

That years and days, the summers and the
springs,

Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer
far,

Through culture, than the wild wealth of
the rock;

The suave plum than the savage-tasted
drupe;

The pastured honey-bee drops choicer
sweet;

The flowers turn double, and the leaves
turn flowers;

That young and tender crescent-moon,
thy slave,

Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by
clouds,

Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?

I have not chanted verse like Homer, no —
Nor swept string like Terpander, no —

nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his
friend:

I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy

With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's art.

Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger; I have
dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, prick'd its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,

And show a better flower if not so large:
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods

Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext

That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate? 50
It might have fallen to another's hand:
what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men —
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's
hearts)

I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up, 64
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? "For" (writest
thou)

"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave
nought.

"Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
"The pictures men shall study; while my
life,

"Complete and whole now in its power
and joy,

"Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
"Is lost indeed; since, what survives
myself?

"The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave, 70
"Set on the promontory which I named.

"And that — some supple courtier of my
heir

"Shall use its robed and sceptred arm,
perhaps,

"To fix the rope to, which best drags it
down.

"I go then: triumph thou, who dost not
go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my
whole mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in
chief,

That admiration grows as knowledge
grows?

That imperfection means perfection hid, 80
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?

If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay per-
ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst
have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the
stage —

Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and
deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which, — had Zeus then ques-
tioned thee

"Shall I go on a step, improve on this, 90
"Do more for visible creatures than is done?"

Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each

"Grow conscious in himself — by that alone.

'All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,

"The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims

"And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,

"Till life's mechanics can no further go —

"And all this joy in natural life is put

"Like fire from off thy finger into each,

"So exquisitely perfect is the same.

14 "But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are;

"It has them, not they it: and so I choose

"For man, thy last premeditated work

("If I might add a glory to the scheme)

"That a third thing should stand apart from both,

"A quality arise within his soul,

"Which, intro-active, made to supervise

"And feel the force it has, may view itself,

"And so be happy." Man might live at first

The animal life: but is there nothing more?

20 In due time, let him critically learn

How he lives; and, the more he gets to know

Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.

Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:

"Let progress end at once, — man make no step

"Beyond the natural man, the better beast,

"Using his senses, not the sense of sense."

30 In man there's failure, only since he left

The lower and unconscious forms of life.

We called it an advance, the rendering plain

Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,

And, by new lore so added to the old,

Take each step higher over the brute's head.

This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,

Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,

Which whole surrounding flats of natural life

Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;

A tower that crowns a country. But alas,

40 The soul now climbs it just to perish there!

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream —

We know this, which we had not else perceived)

That there's a world of capability

For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,

Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,

And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more

"Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!

"Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought

"Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge

Our bounded physical recipiency,

Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,

Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,

It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,

As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.

They praise a fountain in my garden here

Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow

Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.

What if I told her, it is just a thread

From that great river which the hills shut up,

And mock her with my leave to take the same?

The artificer has given her one small tube

Past power to widen or exchange — what boots

To know she might spout oceans if she could?

She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:

And so a man can use but a man's joy

While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,

"See, man, how happy I live, and despair —

"That I may be still happier — for thy use!"

If this were so, we could not thank our lord,

As hearts beat on to doing; 'tis not so —

Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?

Still, no. If care — where is the sign? I ask,

And get no answer, and agree in sum,

O king, with thy profound discouragement,

Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.

Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now: — thou dost except a case —

Holding joy not impossible to one

With artist-gifts — to such a man as I

Who leave behind me living works indeed; 8

For, such a poem, such a painting lives.

What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,

Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)

With feeling joy? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)

With actual living? — Otherwise
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
 Because in my great epos I display
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise,
 can act —
 Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore
 young?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 The many years of pain that taught me
 art!
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 20 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is
 more:
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something
 too.
 Yon rower, with the moulded muscles
 there,
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
 I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an
 ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
 For being beloved: she turns to that young
 man,
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
 I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art
 king!

"But," sayest thou — (and I marvel, I
 repeat,
 20 To find thee trip on such a mere word)
 "what
 "Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does
 not die:
 "Sappho survives, because we sing her
 songs,
 "And Æschylus, because we read his
 plays!"
 Why, if they live still, let them come and
 take
 Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy
 cup,
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I
 survive?
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
 In this, that every day my sense of joy
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
 30 By power and insight) more enlarged,
 more keen;
 While every day my hairs fall more and
 more,
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years in-
 crease —
 The horror quickening still from year to
 year,
 The consummation coming past escape
 When I shall know most, and yet least
 enjoy —
 When all my works wherein I prove my
 worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's
 mouths,
 Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
 I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,

The man who loved his life so over-much, 40
 Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
 I dare at times imagine to my need
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
 Unlimited in capability
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
 — To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made
 strait
 On purpose to make prized the life at
 large —
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call
 death,
 We burst there as the worm into the fly, 50
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.
 But no!
 Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
 He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought
 die:
 Glad for what was! Farewell. And for
 the rest,
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine
 To one called Paulus; we have heard his
 fame
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —
 I know not, nor am troubled much to 60
 know.
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian
 Jew,
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,
 As if his answer could impose at all!
 He writeth, doth he? well, and he may
 write.
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain
 slaves
 Who touched on this same isle, preached
 him and Christ;
 And (as I gathered from a bystander) 70
 Their doctrine could be held by no sane
 man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun per-
 ceives
 First, when he visits, last, too, when he
 leaves
 The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
 By no change of its large calm front of snow.
 And underneath the Mount, a Flower I
 know,
 He cannot have perceived, that changes
 ever
 At his approach; and, in the lost en-
 deavour

To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like
face.

Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh
names vie,

Each to its proper praise and own account:

10 Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sport-
ively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
— The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East in-
deed?

Go! — saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my
device

20 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men
feed

On songs I sing, and therefore bask the
bees

On my flower's breast as on a platform
broad:

But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East — the East! Go, say this,
Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE.¹

TO E. B. B.

1855.

I.

30 THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me to-
gether:

Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,²
Made and wrote them in a certain volume

¹ [Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition. — R. B.]

² There is no reason to believe this to be the fact.

Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view — but one,
the volume.

Who that one, you ask? Your heart in-
structs you.

Did she live and love it all her life-time?

Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets³

Die, and let it drop beside her pillow

Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,

Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —

Cheek, the world was wont to hail a

painter's,

Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a

poet's?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume,

(Taken to his beating bosom by it)

Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,

Would we not? than wonder at Ma-

donnas —

Her, San Sisto⁴ names, and Her, Foligno,⁵

Her, that visits Florence⁶ in a vision,

Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre⁷ —

Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume.⁸

Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple

Guarded long the treasure-book and loved

it.

Guido Reni dying, all Bologna

Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the

treasure!"

Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel: 60

Whom to please? You whisper "Bea-

trice."

While he mused and traced it and retraced

it,

(Peradventure with a pen corroded

Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,

When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the

wicked,

Back he held the brow and pricked its

stigma,

Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,

Loosed him, laughed to see the writing

rankle,

Let the wretch go festering through

Florence) —

Dante, who loved well because he hated, 7

Hated wickedness that hinders loving,

Dante standing, studying his angel, —

³ La Fornarina.

⁴ In Dresden.

⁵ In the Vatican.

⁶ In the Pitti Palace.

⁷ La Belle Jardinière, in the Louvre.

⁸ Really a book of drawings, not sonnets.

In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he — "Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the
poet."
Says the poet — "Then I stopped my
painting."

VI.

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not? — than read a fresh
Inferno.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of impor-
tance."
We and Bice¹ bear the loss for ever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs
not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his
nature.
Ay of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry, —
Does he paint? he fain would write a
poem, —
Does he write? he fain would paint a pic-
ture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's
abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the
water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the
minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — "Shall
smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered — "A
stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went
their journey,
Throwing him for thanks — "But drought
was pleasant."

¹ Beatrice.

Thus old memories mar the actual tri-
umph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious some-
what;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the man-
date,
Carelessness or consciousness — the ges-
ture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed
faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed
prelude —
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and
save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
"Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought
was better."

X.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic
warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven bril-
liance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial
fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI.

Did he love one face from out the thou-
sands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and
wisely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be
opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you
statues,
Make you music that should all-express
me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing:
All the gifts from all the heights, your own,
Love!

XIII.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must
seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last
time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush

Curbs the liberal hand, subservient
proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe
thro' silver,
Fitably serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
10 Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a
poem.

Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours — the rest be all
men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this
sentence:

Pray you, look on these my men and
women,

20 Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all
things.

XV.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's
self!

Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-trans-
figured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-
breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,¹
30 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-
roofs,

Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-
worthy?

Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),

40 She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman,
steersman —

¹ San Miniato, the famous church in Florence.

Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him,
even!

Think, the wonder of the moonstruck
mortal —

When she turns round, comes again in
heaven,

Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered 5
crystals?

Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the
mountain?

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the High-
est,

Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness

Shone the stone, the sapphire of that
paved work,

When they ate and drank and saw God
also!

XVII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever
shall know.

Only this is sure — the sight were other, 6
Not the moon's same side, born late in
Florence,

Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his crea-
tures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the
world with,

One to show a woman when he loves her!

XVIII.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you — yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the
wonder,

Thus they see you, praise you, think they
know you!

There, in turn I stand with them and
praise you —

Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing
it,

Drew one angel — borne, see, on my
bosom!

R. B.

IN A BALCONY.

1855.

IN A BALCONY.

PERSONS.

NORBERT.
 CONSTANCE.
 THE QUEEN.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

Norbert. Now!

Constance. Not now!

Norbert. Give me them again, those hands:

Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
 Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!

You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
 Let me! The Queen must grant whate'er I ask —

How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?

There she stays waiting for me, here stand you;

Some time or other this was to be asked;
 Now is the one time — what I ask, I gain:

Let me ask now, Love! *Constance.* Do, and ruin us.

Norbert. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.

How I do love you! Give my love its way!
 A man can have but one life and one death,
 One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate —

Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,

Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,

Hold you and have you, and then die away,
 If God please, with completion in my soul!

Constance. I am not yours then? How content this man!

I am not his — who change into himself,
 Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,

Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,

Give all that was of me away to him —
 So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,

Takes part with him against the woman here,

Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
 As caring that the world be cognisant

How he loves her and how she worships him,

You have this woman, not as yet that world.

Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me 30
 By saving what I cease to care about,

The courtly name and pride of circumstance —

The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with

Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;

Just that the world may slip from under you —

Just that the world may cry "So much for him —

"The man predestined to the heap of crowns:

"There goes his chance of winning one, at least!"

Norbert. The world!

Constance. You love it. Love me quite as well,

And see if I shall pray for this in vain! 40
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

Norbert. You pray for — what, in vain?

Constance. Oh my heart's heart,
 How I do love you, Norbert! That is right:

But listen, or I take my hands away!

You say, "let it be now": you would go now

And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,

You love me — so you do, thank God!

Norbert. Thank God!

Constance. Yes, Norbert, — but you fain would tell your love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her My hand. Now take this rose and look 50
 at it,

Listening to me. You are the minister,
 The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.

To-night completes your wonderful year's-work

(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
 Made memorable by her life's success,

The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,

Her house had only dreamed of anciently:
 That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,

To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke
the hearts?

You are the fate, your minute's in the
heaven.

Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name
your own reward!"

With leave to clench the past, chain the
to-come,

Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life, —
You choose the single thing she will not
grant;

10 Nay, very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralise your
work:

At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose — her cousin's
hand?

Norbert. Wait. First, do you retain
your old belief

The Queen is generous, — nay, is just?

Constance. There, there!
So men make women love them, while they
know

No more of women's hearts than . . .
look you here,

You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case! For example
now,

20 I'll say — I let you kiss me, hold my
hands —

Why? do you know why? I'll instruct
you, then —

The kiss, because you have a name at
court;

This hand and this, that you may shut in
each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen —
Suppose I am the Queen to whom you
speak:

"I was a nameless man; you needed me:
"Why did I proffer you my aid? there
stood

"A certain pretty cousin at your side.

30 "Why did I make such common cause
with you?

"Access to her had not been easy else.
"You give my labour here abundant
praise?

"Faith, labour, which she overlooked,
grew play.

"How shall your gratitude discharge
itself?

"Give me her hand!"

Norbert. And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just — generous or no!

Constance. Yes, just. You love a rose;
no harm in that:

But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you
said —

Then, mine you still must say or else be
false. 40

You told the Queen you served her for
herself;

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures; there's a
life

Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the
world,

Can recognise its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods, 50
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chases and battles, the whole earth's dis-
play,

Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers
and fruit —

And who shall question that she knows
them all,

In better semblance than the things out-
side?

Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and
blood,

Some lion, with the painted lion there —
You think she'll understand composedly?

— Say, "that's his fellow in the hunting-
piece 60

"Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred
times?"

Not so. Her knowledge of our actual
earth,

Its hopes and fears, concerns and sym-
pathies,

Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her:

How should it, with that life in these four
walls —

That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother — friends, a
heap,

Lovers, no lack — a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie! 70

Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should
be;

All better, all more grandiose than the life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-
paint,

You feel, while you admire. How should
she feel?

Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,

You think to bring this warm real strug-
gling love

In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's 80

the truth —
She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?

You only have to say, "so men are made,

"For this they act; the thing has many names,

"But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!"

Your life slips back; you lose her at the word:

You do not even for amends gain me.

He will not understand; oh, Norbert, Norbert,

Do you not understand?

Norbert. The Queen's the Queen: I am myself — no picture, but alive

In every nerve and every muscle, here

At the palace-window o'er the people's street,

As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:

The good of life is precious to us both. She cannot love; what do I want with rule?

When first I saw your face a year ago

I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice —

"The woman yonder, there's no use of life
"But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one

"And bear them — make a pile of all earth's joys

"And spurn them, as they help or help not this;

"Only, obtain her!" How was it to be?

I found you were the cousin of the Queen;

I must then serve the Queen to get to you. No other way. Suppose there had been one,

And I, by saying prayers to some white star With promise of my body and my soul,

Might gain you, — should I pray the star or no?

Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,

Helped, did what other servants failed to do.

Neither she sought nor I declared my end. Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, —

I therefore name you as that recompense. She dreamed that such a thing could never be?

Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause

In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty? Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives

Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;

I worked because I want you with my soul:

I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

Constance. Had I not loved you from the very first,

Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus

So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,

So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,

You might become impatient. What's conceived

Of us without here, by the folk within?

Where are you now? immersed in cares of state —

Where am I now? intent on festal robes — We two, embracing under death's spread hand!

What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours

Which broke the council up? — to bring about

One minute's meeting in the corridor! And then the sudden sleights, strange

secrecies,

Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs, Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards

of a lock,

"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"

A year of this compression's ecstasy All goes for nothing! you would give this up

For the old way, the open way, the world's, His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!

What tempts you? — their notorious happiness

Makes you ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain

Will be — the Queen grants all that you require,

Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you And me at once, and gives us ample leave

To live like our five hundred happy friends.

The world will show us with officious hand Our chamber-entry, and stand sentinel

Where we so oft have stolen across its traps! Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,

And make it duty to be bold and swift, Which long ago was nature. Have it so!

We never hawked by rights till flung from fist?

Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.

Norbert. Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more —

One made to love you, let the world take note!

Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,

Though hampered by restrictions, barred against

By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies! Set free my love, and see what love can do

Shown in my life — what work will spring from that!

The world is used to have its business done On other grounds, find great effects produced

For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.

For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.

So, good: but let my low ground shame
 their high!
 Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life
 be true!
 And love's the truth of mine. Time prove
 the rest!
 I choose to wear you stamped all over me,
 Your name upon my forehead and my
 breast,
 You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's
 edge,
 That men may see, all over, you in me —
 That pale loves may die out of their pre-
 tence
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall
 off.
 10 Permit this, Constance! Love has been so
 long
 Subdued in me, eating me through and
 through,
 That now 'tis all of me and must have way.
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and
 delays,
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient,
 slow,
 Trembling at last to its assured result:
 Then think of this revulsion! I resume
 Life after death, (it is no less than life,
 After such long unlovely labouring days)
 20 And liberate to beauty life's great need
 O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted
 work,
 Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the
 time,
 This eve intense with yon first trembling
 star
 We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught
 between
 The earth that rises and the heaven that
 bends;
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
 And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
 30 All under God, each measured by itself.
 These statues round us stand abrupt, dis-
 tinct,
 The strong in strength, the weak in weak-
 ness fixed,
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
 Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her
 rose:
 See God's approval on his universe!
 Let us do so — aspire to live as these
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being
 true!
 Take the first way, and let the second come!
 My first is to possess myself of you;
 40 The music sets the march-step — forward,
 then!
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!

Constance. And so shall we be ruined,
 both of us.
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
 You do not know her, were not born to it,
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.
 Love, she is generous, — ay, despite your
 smile,
 Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and 5
 through with cares,
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved,
 Debarred of healthy food. Look to the
 soul —
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
 (The true man's-way) on justice and your
 rights,
 Exactions and acquittance of the past!
 Begin so — see what justice she will deal!
 We women hate a debt as men a gift.
 Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer
 months
 And dole out children leave to go and play, 60
 Herself superior to such lightness — she
 In the arm-chair's state and pedagogic
 pomp —
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth
 outside:
 We wonder such a face looks black on us?
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
 (That were vain truly — none is left to
 wake)
 But let her think her justice is engaged
 To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
 If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt!
 Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit: 70
 Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
 To help a kinswoman, she took me up —
 Did more on that bare ground than other
 loves
 Would do on greater argument. For me,
 I have no equivalent of such cold kind
 To pay her with, but love alone to give
 If I give anything. I give her love:
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
 So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
 That women hate a debt as men a gift. 80
 If I were you, I could obtain this grace —
 Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
 Nor yet be very false as courtiers go —
 Declaring my success was recompense;
 It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
 And then, once loose her generosity, —
 Oh, how I see it! — then, were I but you,
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
 And make it offer what I really take,
 Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand, 90
 Her value as the next thing to the
 Queen's —
 Since none love Queens directly, none dare
 that,
 And a thing's shadow or a name's mere
 echo
 Suffices those who miss the name and thing!

You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
To keep in proof how near her breath you
came.

Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her —
Ask for me that way — (oh, you under
stand)

You'd find the same gift yielded with a
grace,

Which, if you make the least show to ex-
tort . . .

— You'll see! and when you have ruined
both of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

Norbert. Then, if I turn it that way,
you consent?

o 'Tis not my way; I have more hope in
truth:

Still, if you won't have truth — why, this
indeed,

Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.
Will you remain here?

Constance. O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my
way?

Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it
serve?

I owe that withered woman everything —
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my
part —

20 Help me to pay her! Stand upon your
rights?

You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on
you?

Your rights are mine — you have no rights
but mine.

Norbert. Remain here. How you know
me!

Constance. Ah, but still —
[*He breaks from her: she remains.*
Dance-music from within.

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance? She is here as he
said. Speak quick!

Is it so? Is it true or false? One word!

Constance. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks
to thee!

Constance. Madam?

Queen. I love you, Con-
stance, from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you
will,

'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

30 *Constance.* Why should you doubt it?

Queen. Ah, why doubt?
why doubt?

Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?
None see themselves; another sees them
best.

You say "why doubt it?" — you see him
and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith — wherein we
fail —

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and
power,

And while, accepting life, abjure its use.
Constance. I had abjured the hope of love 40

And being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Constance. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, *Constance,*
it was so!

Men say — or do men say it? fancies
say —

"Stop here, your life is set, you are grown
old.

"Too late — no love for you, too late for
love —

"Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Con-
stance love."

One takes the hint — half meets it like a
child,

Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
"Oh love, true, never think of love 50

again!

"I am a queen: I rule, not love forsooth."
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,

Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as
these,

Till, — nay, it does not end so, I thank
God!

Constance. I cannot understand —
Queen. The happier you!

Constance. I know not how it is with men:
For women (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love — but
love!

What else looks good, is some shade flung
from love;

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned 60
by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant!
Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the
rest!

O *Constance*, how I love you!

Constance. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come
through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead

in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my
withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Constance. Tell it me: let me judge if 70
true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will
look at me,

And say, "she's old, she's grown unlovely
quite

"Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still."

Well, so I feared — the curse! so I felt sure!

Constance. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came, — the coming was not strange

Do not I stand and see men come and go? I turned a half-look from my pedestal

Where I grow marble — "one young man the more!

"He will love some one; that is nought to me:

"What would he with my marble stateliness?"

10 Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change — We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed

The old way for the old end — interest. Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts

Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands, Professing they've no care but for your cause,

20 Thought but to help you, love but for yourself, —

And you the marble statue all the time They praise and point at as preferred to life,

Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,

First dancer's, gipsy's, or street baladine's!¹

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear, Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

30 While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love, Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!

There have been moments, if the sentinel Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,

Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees, I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

Constance. Who could have comprehended?

Queen. Ay, who — who?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

¹ Dancer's.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps

It comes too late — would you but tell the truth.

Constance. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came, Outfaced the others, did a work this year

Exceeds in value all was ever done, You know — it is not I who say it — all

Say it. And so (a second pang and worse) I grew aware not only of what he did,

But why so wondrously. Oh, never work Like his was done for work's ignoble

sake — Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!

I felt, I saw, he loved — loved somebody. 50 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 'twas you he loved. *Constance.* Me, madam?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face Met him where'er he looked: and whom

but you Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved his love,

And both of you were in intelligence. You could not loiter in that garden, step

Into this balcony, but I straight was stung And forced to understand. It seemed so 60 true,

So right, so beautiful, so like you both, That all this work should have been done

by him Not for the vulgar hope of recompense, But that at last — suppose, some night

like this Borne on to claim his due reward of me, He might say "Give her hand and pay me

so." And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)

I thought, surmounting all the bitterness, "And he shall have it. I will make her

blest, "My flower of youth, my woman's self 70 that was,

"My happiest woman's self that might have been!

"These two shall have their joy and leave me here."

Yes — yes! *Constance.* Thanks!

Queen. And the word was on my lips

When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear

A mere calm statement of his just desire For payment of his labour. When — O

heaven, How can I tell you? lightning on my eyes

And thunder in my ears proved that first word

Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all —

He loved me — from the first step to the last,

Loved me!

Constance. You hardly saw, scarce heard him speak

Of love: what if you should mistake?

Queen. No, no — No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!

He had not dared to hint the love he felt — You were my reflex — (how I understood!) He said you were the ribbon I had worn, He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,

And love, love came at end of every phrase.

Love is begun; this much is come to pass: The rest is easy. *Constance*, I am yours! I will learn, I will place my life on you, Teach me but how to keep what I have won!

Am I so old? This hair was early grey; But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,

And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.

I could sing once too; that was in my youth. Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,

Beautiful — for the last French painter did!

I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank —

I trust you. How I loved you from the first!

Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out

And set her by their side to take the eye: I must have felt that good would come from you.

I am not generous — like him — like you! But he is not your lover after all:

It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?

You have not been mistaking words or looks?

He said you were the reflex of myself.

And yet he is not such a paragon To you, to younger women who may choose

Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!

You know you never named his name to me:

You know, I cannot give him up — ah God,

Not up now, even to you!

Constance. Then calm yourself. *Queen.* See, I am old — look here, you happy girl!

I will not play the fool, deceive — ah, whom?

'Tis all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek

And what a contrast does the moon behold! But then I set my life upon one chance, The last chance and the best — am I not left,

My soul, myself? All women love great men

If young or old; it is in all the tales: Young beauties love old poets who can love —

Why should not he, the poems in my soul, The passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice, Life-long, death-long? I throw them at his feet.

Who cares to see the fountain's very shape, Whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?

You could not praise indeed the empty conch;

But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself. How I will love him! Cannot men love love?

Who was a queen and loved a poet once Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!

Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.

They love so many women in their youth, And even in age they all love whom they please;

And yet the best of them confide to friends That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love —

They spend a day with such and tire the next:

They like soul — well then, they like phantasy,

Novelty even. Let us confess the truth, Horrible though it be, that prejudice, Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.

They will, they do: and will not, does not — he?

Constance. How can he? You are wedded: 'tis a name

We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,

His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled

As you believe and I incline to think, Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

Queen. Hear her! There, there now — could she love like me?

What did I say of smooth-checked youth and grace?

See all it does or could do! so youth loves! Oh, tell him, *Constance*, you could never do

What I will — you, it was not born in! I Will drive these difficulties far and fast As yonder mists curdling before the moon. I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve

My youth from its enforced calamity, Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his.

His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

Constance. You will do — dare do . . .
pause on what you say!

Queen. Hear her! I thank you, sweet,
for that surprise.

You have the fair face: for the soul, see
mine!

I have the strong soul: let me teach you,
here.

I think I have borne enough and long
enough,

And patiently enough, the world remarks,
To have my own way now, unblamed by
all.

It does so happen (I rejoice for it)

10 This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident ex-
press:

And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful
now,

Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost
fear

To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.

Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! Could Norbert see
me now!

20 *Constance.* Let me consider. It is all
too strange.

Queen. You, Constance, learn of me;
do you, like me!

You are young, beautiful: my own, best
girl,

You will have many lovers, and love one —
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit
yours:

Taller than he is, since yourself are tall.
Love him, like me! Give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your
pride,

Hope, fear, — your own good as you saw
it once,

And love him simply for his very self.

30 Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne,
lose life,

Do all but just unlove him! He loves
me.

Constance. He shall.

Queen. You, step inside my
inmost heart!

Give me your own heart: let us have one
heart!

I'll come to you for counsel; "this he says,
"This he does; what should this amount
to, pray?

"Beseech you, change it into current
coin!

"Is that worth kisses? Shall I please him
there?"

And then we'll speak in turn of you —
what else?

Your love, according to your beauty's 40
worth,

For you shall have some noble love, all
gold:

Whom choose you? we will get him at your
choice.

— Constance, I leave you. Just a minute
since,

I felt as I must die or be alone

Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:

Now, I would face the world with my new
life,

Wear my new crown. I'll walk around
the rooms,

And then come back and tell you how it
feels.

How soon a smile of God can change the
world!

How we are made for happiness — how 50
work

Grows play, adversity a winning fight!

True, I have lost so many years: what
then!

Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here! 'Tis as different from
dreams,

From the mind's cold calm estimate of
bliss,

As these stone statues from the flesh and
blood.

The comfort thou hast caused mankind,
God's moon!

[*She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE.*
Dance-music from within.

NORBERT enters.

Norbert. Well? we have but one minute
and one word!

Constance. I am yours, Norbert!

Norbert. Yes, mine.

Constance. Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you. 60

Norbert. Constance?

Constance. Your own! I know
the thriftier way

Of giving — haply, 'tis the wiser way.

Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole

Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,

With a new largess still at each despair)

And force you keep in sight the deed, pre-
serve

Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,

My giving and your taking; both our joys

Dying together. Is it the wiser way?

I choose the simpler; I give all at once.

Know what you have to trust to, trade
upon!

Use it, abuse it, — anything but think

Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,

"And what my means, I might have
thriven with it."

This is your means. I give you all my-
self.

Norbert. I take you and thank God.

Constance. Look on through years!
We cannot kiss, a second day like this;
Else were this earth no earth.

Norbert. With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.

Constance. So, best!
— I try to see those years — I think I see.
You walk quick and new warmth comes;
you look back

And lay all to the first glow — not sit down
For ever brooding on a day like this
While seeing embers whiten and love die.
Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

Norbert. Just so. I take and know
you all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give me
time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know
me.

My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out whereto you condense
yours —

The whole slow circle round you I must
move,

To be just you. I look to a long life
20 To decompose this minute, prove its
worth.

'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you, in the end, what fire was
crammed

In that mere stone you struck: how could
you know,

If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth
would hide

Its coldness, were it cold.

Constance. Put how prove, how?

Norbert. Prove in my life, you ask?

Constance. Quick, Norbert —
how?

Norbert. That's easy told. I count life
just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the
man.

30 Who keeps one end in view makes all things
serve.

As with the body — he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength
alike:

So must I seize and task all means to prove
And show this soul of mine, you crown
as yours,

And justify us both.

Constance. Could you write books,
Paint pictures! One sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

Norbert. And loves one's painting and
one's writing, then,

And not one's mistress! All is best, be-
lieve,

40 And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life —

Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take your
face

And write of it and paint it — to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like
form

With earth's real blood and breath, the
beauteous life

She makes despised for ever? You are
mine,

Made for me, not for others in the world, 50
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you
look.

I come to you; I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens
there

Paint us!

Constance. So, best!

Norbert. I understand your soul.

You live, and rightly sympathise with life,
With action, power, success. This way
is straight;

And time were short beside, to let me
change

The craft my childhood learnt: my craft
shall serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose, 60
Manure their barren lives, and force
thence fruit

First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one soul,
Through ways of work appointed by the
world.

I am not bid create — men see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that —
But find and bind and bring to bear their
wills.

So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, power's first outbreak
here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy, 70
And instincts of the heart that teach the
head?

What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, novel brain
Whose will they venture in the place of
theirs,

Whose work, they trust, shall find them as
novel ways

To untried heights which yet he only sees?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this

Queen,
This people — in our phrase, this mass of
men —

See how the mass lies passive to my hand
Now that my hand is plastic, with you by 80
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the
first!

My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,

The long uncertain struggle, — the success
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's
lip,

While rounded fair for human sense to see
The Graces in a dance men recognise
With turbulent applause and laughs of
heart!

So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin . . .

Constance. I ever helping?

Norbert.

Thus!
[As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.]

10 *Constance.* Hist, madam! So have I
performed my part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!

Begin, to end the sooner! What's a kiss?

Norbert. Constance?

Constance. Why, must I
teach it you again?

You want a witness to your dulness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat — when some young hand-
some man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,

20 So very far beyond him, as he says —
So hopelessly in love that but to speak
Would prove him mad, — he thinks
judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul,
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face.
When his end's gained — (sir, do you
understand?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him
first,

— May I not say so, madam? — tops his
hope,

30 And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same
about —

Why, in the moment when such joy ex-
plodes,

I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-
horse,

Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"
Forget it, show his back unmannerly:

But like a liberal heart will rather turn

And say, "A tingling time of hope was
ours;

40 "Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two
lived

"A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
"The confidant, the Constance, served
not ill.

"And though I shall forget her in due time,

"Her use being answered now, as reason
bids.

"Nay as herself bids from her heart of
hearts, —

"Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to
her,

"The first good praise goes to the pros-
perous tool,

"And the first — which is the last — re-
warding kiss."

Norbert. Constance, it is a dream —
ah, see, you smile!

Constance. So, now his part being
properly performed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine

As duly; I do justice in my turn.

Yes, madam, he has loved you — long and
well;

He could not hope to tell you so — 'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible,
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their
place

When they had wandered else into despair,
And kept love constant toward its natural
aim.

Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-
way

And meet us royally and spare our fears: 60

'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do
I.

Take him — with my full heart! my work
is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself — the only one on earth who can —
Do all for him, much more than a mere
heart

Which though warm is not useful in its
warmth

As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him —
For him, — he knows his own part!

Norbert. Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak 70
now?

Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish
child,

Or did you but accept it? Well — at
least

You lose by it.

Constance. Nay, madam, 'tis your
turn!

Restrain him still from speech a little more,
And make him happier as more confident!

Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!

Mark, *Norbert!* Do not shrink now!
Here I yield

My whole right in you to the Queen, ob-
serve!

With her go put in practice the great
schemes

You teem with, follow the career else 84
closed —

Be all you cannot be except by her!

Behold her! — Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything — frankly say you love him!

Else

He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in His fear than you conceive: I know the man!

Norbert. I know the woman somewhat, and confess

I thought she had jested better: she begins To overcharge her part. I gravely wait Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit, Eccentric speech and variable mirth,

Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold, Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)

— May still be right: I may do well to speak

And make authentic what appears a dream To even myself. For, what she says, is true:

Yes, Norbert — what you spoke just now of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me, But justified a warmth felt long before.

Yes, from the first — I loved you, I shall say:

Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said.

Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak

To-night, the night that crowns your twelve-months' toil:

But still I had not waited to discern

Your heart so long, believe me! From the first

The source of so much zeal was almost plain,

In absence even of your own words just now

Which hazarded the truth. 'Tis very strange,

But takes a happy ending — in your love Which mine meets: be it so! as you chose me,

So I choose you.

Norbert. And worthily you choose.

I will not be unworthy your esteem, No, madam. I do love you; I will meet

Your nature, now I know it. This was well.

I see, — you dare and you are justified:

But none had ventured such experiment, Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,

Less confident of finding such in me. I joy that thus you test me ere you grant

The dearest richest beauteousest and best Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.

So — back again into my part's set words — Devotion to the uttermost is yours,

But no, you cannot, madam, even you, Create in me the love our Constance does.

Or — something truer to the tragic phrase —

Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent Invites a certain insect — that's myself — But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.

I take this lady.

Constance. Stay — not hers, the trap —

Stay, Norbert — that mistake were worst of all!

He is too cunning, madam! It was I, I, Norbert, who . . .

Norbert. You, was it, Constance?

Then,

But for the grace of this divinest hour Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!

I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:

She may experiment upon my heart And I instruct her too by the result.

But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long

Have told my heart-beats over, held my life

In those white hands of yours, — it is not well!

Constance. Tush! I have said it, did I 60 not say it all?

The life, for her — the heart-beats, for her sake!

Norbert. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test?

There's not the meanest woman in the world,

Not she I least could love in all the world, Whom, did she love me, had love proved

itself, I dare insult as you insult me now.

Constance. I could say, if it must be said, "Take back the soul you offer, I keep

mine!" But — "Take the soul still quivering on

your hand, "The soul so offered, which I cannot use, 70

"And, please you, give it to some playful friend,

"For — what's the trifle he requites me with?"

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man, That two may mock her heart if it suc-

cumb? No: fearing God and standing 'neath his

heaven, I would not dare insult a woman so,

Were she the meanest woman in the world, And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Constance. Norbert!

Norbert. I love once as I live but once.

What case is this to think or talk about? 80 I love you. Would it mend the case at

all If such a step as this killed love in me?

Your part were done: account to God for it!

But mine — could murdered love get up again,

And kneel to whom you please to designate,
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now
you know

That body and soul have each one life,
but one:

And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

Constance. See the Queen! Norbert
— this one more last word —

If thus you have taken jest for earnest —
thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

Norbert. Ah, no jest holds here!

10 Where is the laughter in which jests break
up,

And what this horror that grows palpable?

Madam — why grasp you thus the balcony?

Have I done ill? Have I not spoken
truth?

How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, what my love for Constance
meant?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so
one takes

A beggar, — asks him, what would buy
his child?

And then approves the expected laugh of
scorn

20 Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha,
what's this?

You two glare each at each like panthers
now.

Constance, the world fades; only you
stand there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of
things,

Sell me — your soul of souls, for any price?
No — no — 'tis easy to believe in you!

Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well,
still —

Though I might curse, I love you. I am
love

And cannot change: love's self is at your
feet! [*The QUEEN goes out.*]

Constance. Feel my heart; let it die
against your own!

Norbert. Against my own. Explain
not; let this be!

This is life's height.

Constance. Yours, yours, yours!

Norbert. You and I —

Why care by what meanders we are here
I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have
died

Trying to find this place, which we have
found

Constance. Found, found!

Norbert. Sweet, never fear
what she can do!

We are past harm now.

Constance. On the breast of
God.

I thought of men — as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!

Norbert. This must end here:

It is too perfect.

Constance. There's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? It is one
blaze

About me and within me.

Norbert. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark

And sever us from the rest!

Constance. And so do well.

Now the doors open.

Norbert. 'Tis the guard comes.

Constance. Kiss!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

1864.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I. — JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW.

I.

AH, Love, but a day
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged:
Summer has stopped.

II.

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

III.

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee — (oh, haste!)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II. — BY THE FIRESIDE.

I.

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France!
Well, poor sailors took their chance;
I take mine.

II.

30 A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea:
Do sailors eye the casement — mute,
Drenched and stark,
From their bark —
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy freight
— Thee and me?

III.

God help you, sailors, at your need!
Spare the curse!
For some ships, safe in port indeed, 40
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept:
That is worse.

IV.

Who lived here before us two?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever — would I knew! —
Watch the man
With whom began 50
Love's voyage full-sail, — (now, gnash
your teeth!)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares?

III. — IN THE DOORWAY.

I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the
rail,
And looks sea-ward:
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-
pale
To the leeward, —
On the weather-side, black, spotted white
with the wind.
"Good fortune departs, and disaster's be-
hind," —
Hark, the wind with its wants and its 60
infinite wail!

II.

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness,
has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the
world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her
sake:
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled
on its stake!
My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks
curled.

III.

Yet here are we two; we have love, house
enough,
With the field there,

This house of four rooms, that field red
and rough,

Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or
a bent;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;
And they both will be gone at November's
rebuff.

IV.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore
bring change

To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite
range,

And inherit

His power to put life in the darkness and
cold?

Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be
bold!

Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter
estrangle!

IV. — ALONG THE BEACH.

I.

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love — is that much true?
And so I did love, so I do:
What has come of it all along?

II.

I took you — how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III.

Yes, earth — yes, mere ignoble earth!
Now do I mis-state, mistake?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it
worth?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake?

IV.

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love! not so, indeed!
You were just weak earth, I knew:
With much in you waste, with many a
weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V.

And such as you were, I took you for mine:
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

VI.

Well, and if none of these good things
came,

What did the failure prove?

The man was my whole world, all the same, 41
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to
blame,

And, either or both, to love.

VII.

Yet this turns now to a fault — there!
there!

That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song:

VIII.

"How the light, light love, he has wings to
fly

"At suspicion of a bond:

"My wisdom has bidden your pleasure 50
good-bye,

"Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
"And why should you look beyond?"

V. — ON THE CLIFF.

I.

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II.

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face:
No iron like that!
Baked dry; of a weed, of a shell, no trace:
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III.

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned
too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right. 70

IV.

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly:
No turf, no rock: in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red!

V.

Is it not so
 With the minds of men?
 The level and low,
 The burnt and bare, in themselves; but
 then
 With such a blue and red grace, not
 theirs, —
 Love settling unawares!

VI. — READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

I.

"STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased
 or no?
 "Which needs the other's office, thou
 or I?
 "Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
 "And can, in truth, my voice untie
 "Its links, and let it go?"

II.

"Art thou a dumb wronged thing that
 would be righted,
 "Entrusting thus thy cause to me?
 Forbear!
 "No tongue can mend such pleadings;
 faith, requited
 "With falsehood, — love, at last aware
 "Of scorn, — hopes, early blighted, —

III.

"We have them; but I know not any
 tone
 "So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
 "Dost think men would go mad without a
 moan,
 "If they knew any way to borrow
 "A pathos like thy own?"

IV.

"Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the
 sighs? The one
 "So long escaping from lips starved and
 blue,
 "That lasts while on her pallet-bed the
 nun
 "Stretches her length; her foot comes
 through
 "The straw she shivers on;

V.

"You had not thought she was so tall:
 and spent,
 "Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers
 shut
 "Close, close, their sharp and livid nails
 indent
 "The clammy palm; then all is mute:
 "That way, the spirit went.

VI.

"Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
 "Thy will to help me? — like the dog I
 found
 "Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
 "Who would not take my food, poor
 hound,
 "But whined and licked my hand."

VII.

All this, and more, comes from some young
 man's pride
 Of power to see, — in failure and mis-
 take,
 Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side, —
 Merely examples for his sake, 40
 Helps to his path untried:

VIII.

Instances he must — simply recognise?
 Oh, more than so! — must, with a
 learner's zeal,
 Make doubly prominent, twice emphasise,
 By added touches that reveal
 The god in babe's disguise.

IX.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the
 rest!
 Himself the undefeated that shall be:
 Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to
 test, —
 His triumph, in eternity 50
 Too plainly manifest!

X.

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what
 the wind
 Means in its moaning — by the happy
 prompt
 Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for kind
 Calm years, exacting their accompt
 Of pain, mature the mind:

XI.

And some midsummer morning, at the lull
 Just about daybreak, as he looks across
 A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
 To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss, 60
 Next minute must annul, —

XII.

Then, when the wind begins among the
 vines,
 So low, so low, what shall it say but
 this?
 "Here is the change beginning, here the
 lines
 "Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
 "The limit time assigns."

XIII.

Nothing can be as it has been before;
 Better, so call it, only not the same.
 To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,
 And keep it changeless! such our claim;
 So answered, — Never more!

XIV.

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the
 world;
 Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and
 die.
 Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man is
 hurled
 From change to change unceasingly,
 10 His soul's wings never furled!

XV.

That's a new question; still replies the fact,
 Nothing endures: the wind moans,
 saying so;
 We moan in acquiescence: there's life's
 pact,
 Perhaps probation — do *I* know?
 God does: endure his act!

XVI.

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair good
 wise thing
 Just as he grasped it! For himself,
 death's wave;
 While time first washes — ah, the
 sting! —
 20 O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII. — AMONG THE ROCKS.

I.

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old
 earth,
 This autumn morning! How he sets
 his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees
 and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
 Listening the while, where on the heap
 of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters
 sweet.

II.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles
 and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth your
 love,
 30 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for
 you:
 Make the low nature better by your
 throes!
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VIII. — BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD.

I.

"As like as a Hand to another Hand!"
 Whoever said that foolish thing,
 Could not have studied to understand
 The counsels of God in fashioning,
 Out of the infinite love of his heart,
 This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
 From the world of wonder left to praise,
 If I tried to learn the other ways
 Of love in its skill, or love in its power,
 "As like as a Hand to another Hand":
 Who said that, never took his stand,
 Found and followed, like me, an hour,
 The beauty in this, — how free, how fine
 To fear, almost, — of the limit-line!
 As I looked at this, and learned and drew,
 Drew and learned, and looked again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 50 And a fancy seized me; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
 I kissed all right where the drawing
 ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II.

'Tis a clay cast the perfect thing,
 From Hand live once, dead long ago: 60
 Princess-like it wears the ring
 To fancy's eye, by which we know
 That here at length a master found
 His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
 As soaring genius sank to ground,
 And pencil could not emulate
 The beauty in this, — how free, how fine
 To fear almost! — of the limit-line.
 Long ago the god, like me
 The worm, learned, each in our degree: 70
 Looked and loved, learned and drew,
 Drew and learned and loved again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Till beauty mounted into his brain
 And on the finger which outvied
 His art he placed the ring that's there,
 Still by fancy's eye descried,
 In token of a marriage rare:
 For him on earth, his art's despair,
 80 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
 I turned from to a cold clay cast —
 I have my lesson, understand
 The worth of flesh and blood at last.
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
 Because he could not change the hue,
 Mend the lines and make them true

To this which met his soul's demand,
 Would Da Vinci turn from you?
 I hear him laugh my woes to scorn —
 "The fool forsooth is all forlorn
 "Because the beauty, she thinks best,
 "Lived long ago or was never born,
 "Because no beauty bears the test
 "In this rough peasant Hand! Con-
 fessed!

"Art is null and study void!"
 "So sayest thou? So said not I,
 "Who threw the faulty pencil by,
 "And years instead of hours employed,
 "Learning the veritable use
 "Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
 "Lines and hues of the outer sheath,
 "If haply I might reproduce
 "One motive of the powers profuse,
 "Flesh and bone and nerve that make
 "The poorest coarsest human hand
 "An object worthy to be scanned
 "A whole life long for their sole sake.
 "Shall earth and the cramped moment
 space
 "Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
 "Now the parts and then the whole!
 "Who art thou, with stunted soul
 "And stunted body, thus to cry
 "I love, — shall that be life's strait dote?
 "I must live beloved or die!"
 "This peasant hand that spins the wool
 "And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
 "Poor and coarse with beauty gone,
 "What use survives the beauty?" Fool!

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
 I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX. — ON DECK.

I.

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,
 Nothing I did that you care to see,
 Nothing I was that deserves a place
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

II.

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
 Such things have been as a mutual flame.
 Your soul's locked fast, but, love for a key,
 You might let it loose, till I grew the
 same
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand:
 strange plea!

III.

For then, then, what would it matter to me
 That I was the harsh ill-favoured one?
 We both should be like as pen and pen;
 It was ever so since the world begun:
 So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV.

How strange it were if you had all me, 50
 As I have all you in my heart and brain,
 You, whose least word brought gloom or
 glee,
 Who never lifted the hand in vain
 Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

V.

Strange, if a face, when you thought of
 me,
 Rose like your own face present now,
 With eyes as dear in their due degree,
 Much such a mouth, and as bright a
 brow,
 Till you saw yourself, while you cried "Tis
 She!"

VI.

Well, you may, you must, set down to me 60
 Love that was life, life that was love;
 A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
 A passion to stand as your thoughts
 approve,
 A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

VII.

But did one touch of such love for me
 Come in a word or a look of yours,
 Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
 Round me and round while life en-
 dures,
 Could I fancy "As I feel, thus feels he";

VIII.

Why, fade you might to a thing like me, 70
 And your hair grow these coarse hanks of
 hair,
 Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree, —
 You might turn myself! — should I
 know or care
 When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

GOLD HAIR:

A STORY OF PORNIC.

I.

Oh, the beautiful girl, too white,
 Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
 Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
 And a boasted name in Brittany
 She bore, which I will not write.

II.

Too white, for the flower of life is red; 80
 Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
 Of a soul that is meant (her parents
 said)
 To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
 And blossom in heaven instead.

III.

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!

One grace that grew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so
 sparse,

And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

IV.

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
Freshness and fragrance — floods of it,
 too!

Gold, did I say? Nay, gold's mere dross:
Here, Life smiled, "Think what I meant
 to do!"

10 And Love sighed, "Fancy my loss!"

V.

So, when she died, it was scarce more
 strange

'Than that, when delicate evening dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
'There's a shoot of colour startles the
 skies

With sudden, violent change, —

VI.

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,

As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed; a spot came out on her
 cheek,

A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
20 And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

VII.

'Not my hair!' made the girl her moan —

"All the rest is gone or to go;

"But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
"Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts
 may know!

"Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

VIII.

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;

Her parents sobbed their worst on that;
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,

30 As it spread — not flowing free,

IX.

But curled around her brow, like a crown,

And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck — ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
1' the gold, it reached her gown.

X.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge

'Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its
 hair:

E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,

As he planted the crucifix with care
40 On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI.

And thus was she buried, inviolate

Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar; keeping saintly state

In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

XII.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,

Though your mouth might twitch with a
 dubious smile,

As they told you of gold, both robe and
 pall,

How she prayed them leave it alone
 awhile,

So it never was touched at all.

XIII.

Years flew; this legend grew at last

The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast

Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed:

XIV.

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not
 earth;

Had turned an angel before the time:

Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime

Was — she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV.

At little pleasant Pornic church,

It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
Was taken to pieces: left in the lurch,

A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI.

'Twas the space where our sires would lay
 a saint,

A benefactor, — a bishop, suppose,

A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled
 rose,

Things sanctity saves from taint;

XVII.

So we come to find them in after-days

When the corpse is presumed to have
 done with gauds

Of use to the living, in many ways:

For the boys get pelf, and the town
 applauds,

And the church deserves the praise.

XVIII.

They grubbed with a will: and at length —

O cor

*Humanum, pectora cæca, and the
 rest! —*

They found — no gaud they were prying
for,
No ring, no rose, but — who would have
guessed? —
A double Louis-d'or!

XIX.

Here was a case for the priest: he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, "There's a bird
"Chirps in my ear": then, "Bring a
spade,
"Dig deeper!" — he gave the word.

XX.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it
once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

XXI.

Hid there? Why? Could the girl be
wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?
Had a spider found out the communion-
cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font?

XXII.

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it —
alas —
Till the humour grew to a head and
burst,
And she cried, at the final pass, —

XXIII.

"Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
"Nor lover nor friend — be gold for
both!
"Gold I lack; and, my all, my own,
"It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die
loth
"If they let my hair alone!"

XXIV.

Louis-d'or, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now do you see? With the priest to shrive,
With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive, —

XXV.

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering
still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
For gold, the true sort — "Gold in
heaven, if you will;
"But I keep earth's too, I hope."

XXVI.

Enough! The priest took the grave's grim
yield:
The parents, they eyed that price of sin 46
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place to *bury strangers in*,
The hideous Potter's Field.

XXVII.

But the priest bethought him: "'Milk
that's spilt'
"— You know the adage! Watch and
pray!
"Saints tumble to earth with so slight a
tilt!
"It would build a new altar; that, we
may!"
And the altar therewith was built.

XXVIII.

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
As the text of a sermon, which now I 50
preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of
each
Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith proves false, I
find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

XXX.

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin. 60
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank
her dart
At the head of a lie — taught Original
Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT.

I.

WOULD it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the
pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan,
undo!

II.

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out 70
again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was
plain;

The dull turned bright as I caught your
white

On my bosom: you saved me — saved in
vain

If you ruined yourself, and all through
me!

III.

Yes, all through the speckled beast that I
am,

Who taught you to stoop; you gave me
yourself,

And bound your soul by the vows that
damn:

Since on better thought you break, as
you ought,

Vows — words, no angel set down, some
elf

Mistook, — for an oath, an epigram!

IV.

10 Yes, might I judge you, here were my
heart,

And a hundred its like, to treat as you
pleased!

I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or make;

If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the
memory-smart?

V.

But what will God say? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this thing
Though earth were unworthy to feel your
feet,

There's a heaven above may deserve
your love:

20 Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold
ring

And a promise broke, were it just or
meet?

VI.

And I to have tempted you! I, who tired
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank! Un-
wise,

I loved and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you
mad,

And you meant to have hated and de-
spised —

Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

VII.

She, ruined? How? No heaven for
her?

Crowns to give, and none for the brow

30 That looked like marble and smelt like
myrrh?

Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-
branch borne,

And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves *aver*?

VIII.

Hardly! That must be understood!

The earth is your place of penance,
then;

And what will it prove? I desire your
good,

But, plot as I may, I can find no way

How a blow should fall, such as falls on
men,

Nor prove too much for your woman-
hood.

IX.

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life, 4
When you walk alone, and review the
past;

And I, who so long shall have done with
strife,

And journeyed my stage and earned my
wage

And retired as was right, — I am called at
last

When the devil stabs you, to lend the
knife.

X.

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,

The happy, that lasted my whole life long:
For a promise broke, not for first words

spoke,

The true, the only, that turn my grave 5
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI.

Witness beforehand! Off I trip

On a safe path gay through the flowers
you flung:

My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I

know

Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII.

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but wait!
I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots!

It may be for yourself, when you meditate, 6
That you grieve — for slain ruth, mur-
dered truth.

"Though falsehood escape in the end,
what boots?

"How truth would have triumphed!" —
you sigh too late.

XIII.

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I
say!

Well, it is lost now; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:

You should hardly grudge, could I be
your judge!

But hush! For you, can be no despair:
'There's amends: 'tis a secret: hope and

pray!

XIV.

For I was true at least — oh, true enough!
 And, Dear, truth is not as good as it
 seems!
 Commend me to conscience! Idle stuff!
 Much help is in mine, as I mope and
 pine,
 And skulk through day, and scowl in my
 dreams
 At my swan's obtaining the crow's
 rebuff.

XV.

Men tell me of truth now. — "False!" I
 cry:
 Of beauty — "A mask, friend! Look
 beneath!"
 We take our own method, the devil and I,
 With pleasant and fair and wise and
 rare:
 And the best we wish to what lives, is —
 death;
 Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie!

XVI.

Far better commit a fault and have
 done —
 As you, Dear! — for ever; and choose
 the pure,
 And look where the healing waters run,
 And strive and strain to be good again,
 And a place in the other world ensure,
 All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII.

Misery! What shall I say or do?
 I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade:
 Most like, you are glad you deceived me —
 rue
 No whit of the wrong: you endured too
 long,
 Have done no evil and want no aid,
 Will live the old life out and chance the
 new.

XVIII.

And your sentence is written all the same,
 And I can do nothing, — pray, perhaps:
 But somehow the world pursues its
 game, —
 If I pray, if I curse, — for better or
 worse:
 And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,
 And my heart feels ice while my words
 breathe flame.

XIX.

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
 Are you still so fair? Have you still the
 eyes?
 Be happy! Add but the other grace,
 Be good! Why want what the angels
 vaunt?
 I knew you once: but in Paradise,
 If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

DIS ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON
DE NOS JOURS.

I.

STOP, let me have the truth of that!
 Is that all true? I say, the day
 Ten years ago when both of us
 Met on a morning, friends — as thus 40
 We meet this evening, friends or what? —

II.

Did you — because I took your arm
 And sillily smiled, "A mass of brass
 "That sea looks, blazing underneath!"
 While up the cliff-road edged with
 heath,
 We took the turns nor came to harm —

III.

Did you consider "Now makes twice
 "That I have seen her, walked and
 talked
 "With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
 "Whose worth I weigh: she tries to 50
 sing;
 "Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice;

IV.

"Reads verse and thinks she understands;
 "Loves all, at any rate, that's great,
 "Good, beautiful; but much as we
 "Down at the bath-house love the sea,
 "Who breathe its salt and bruise its sands:

V.

"While . . . do but follow the fishing-gull
 "That flaps and floats from wave to
 cave!
 "There's the sea-lover, fair my friend!
 "What then? Be patient, mark and 60
 mend!
 "Had you the making of your skull?"

VI.

And did you, when we faced the church
 With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
 From human fellowship so far,
 Where a few graveyard crosses are,
 And garlands for the swallows' perch, —

VII.

Did you determine, as we stepped
 O'er the lone stone fence, "Let me get
 "Her for myself, and what's the earth
 "With all its art, verse, music, worth — 70
 "Compared with love, found, gained, and
 kept?

VIII.

"Schumann's our music-maker now;
 "Has his march-movement youth and
 mouth?

"Ingres's the modern man that paints;
 "Which will lean on me, of his saints?
 "Heine for songs; for kisses, how?"

IX.

And did you, when we entered, reached
 The votive frigate, soft aloft
 Riding on air this hundred years,
 Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,
 Did you draw profit while she preached?

X.

Resolving, "Fools we wise men grow!
 "Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
 "Some question that might find reply
 "As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped
 "And rush of red to cheek and brow:

XI.

"Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
 "'Mid the blue weed-flowers round the
 mound
 "Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
 "For one more look at baths and bay,
 "Sand, sea-gulls, and the old church last

XII.

"A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and
 lamed,
 "Famous, however, for verse and worse,
 "Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
 "When gout and glory seat me there,
 "So, one whose love-freaks pass un-
 blamed, —

XIII.

"And this young beauty, round and sound
 "As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
 "With loves and doves, at all events
 "With money in the Three per Cents;
 "Whose choice of me would seem pro-
 found: —

XIV.

"She might take me as I take her,
 "Perfect the hour would pass, alas!
 "Climb high, love high, what matter?
 Still,
 "Feet, feelings, must descend the hill:
 "An hour's perfection can't recur.

XV.

"Then follows Paris and full time
 "For both to reason: 'Thus with us!'
 "She'll sigh, 'Thus girls give body and
 soul
 "At first word, think they gain the
 goal,
 "When 'tis the starting-place they climb!

XVI.

"My friend makes verse and gets re-
 nown;
 "Have they all fifty years, his peers?

"He knows the world, firm, quiet and
 gay;
 "Boys will become as much one day:
 "They're fools; he cheats, with beard less
 brown.

XVII.

"For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
 "He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
 "I want, who am old and know too much;
 "I'd catch youth: lend me sight and
 touch!
 "Drop heart's blood where life's wheels
 grate dry!"

XVIII.

"While I should make rejoinder" — (then
 It was, no doubt, You ceased that least 50
 Light pressure of my arm in yours)
 "I can conceive of cheaper cures
 "For a yawning-fit o'er books and men.

XIX.

"What? All I am, was, and might be,
 "All, books taught, art brought, life's
 whole strife,
 "Painful results since precious, just
 "Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
 "For two cheeks freshened by youth and
 sea?

XX.

"All for a nosegay! — what came first;
 "With fields on flower, untried each 60
 side;
 "I rally, need my books and men,
 "And find a nosegay: drop it, then,
 "No match yet made for best or worst!"

XXI.

That ended me. You judged the porch
 We left by, Norman; took our look
 At sea and sky; wondered so few
 Find out the place for air and view;
 Remarked the sun began to scorch:

XXII.

Descended, soon regained the baths,
 And then, good-bye! Years ten since 70
 then:
 Ten years! We meet: you tell me, now,
 By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
 On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII.

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
 Your lore! Who made things plain in
 vain?
 What was the sea for? What, the grey
 Sad church, that solitary day,
 Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

XXIV.

Was there nought better than to enjoy?
 No feat which, done, would make time 80
 break,

And let us pent-up creatures through
 Into eternity, our due?
 No forcing earth teach heaven's employ?

XXV.

No wise beginning, here and now,
 What cannot grow complete (earth's
 feat)

And heaven must finish, there and then?
 No tasting earth's true food for men,
 Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI.

No grasping at love, gaining a share
 O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
 With death, so, sure of range above
 The limits here? For us and love,
 Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII.

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
 Good unto good again, in vain?
 You loved, with body worn and weak;
 I loved, with faculties to seek:
 Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?

XXVIII.

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
 Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
 Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
 He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
 Man, found with either in default.

XXIX.

But what's whole, can increase no more,
 Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its
 sphere
 The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
 You knew not? That I well believe;
 Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.

XXX.

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
 Ankle or something. "Pooh," cry you?
 At any rate she danced, all say,
 Vilely; her vogue has had its day.
 Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE.

I.

HERE was I with my arm and heart
 And brain, all yours for a word, a want
 Put into a look — just a look, your part, —
 While mine, to repay it . . . vainest
 vaunt,
 Were the woman, that's dead, alive to hear,
 Had her lover, that's lost, love's proof to
 show!
 But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
 From the churchyard neither, miles
 removed,
 Though I feel by a pulse within my check,

Which stabs and stops, that the woman I
 loved
 Needs help in her grave and finds none
 near,
 Wants warmth from the heart which
 sends it — so!

II.

Did I speak once angrily, all the drear days
 You lived, you woman I loved so well,
 Who married the other? Blame or praise,
 Where was the use then? Time would
 tell,
 And the end declare what man for you, 50
 What woman for me, was the choice of
 God.
 But, Edith dead! no doubting more!
 I used to sit and look at my life
 As it rippled and ran till, right before,
 A great stone stopped it: oh, the strife
 Of waves at the stone some devil threw
 In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God!

III.

But either I thought, "They may churn
 and chide
 "Awhile, my waves which came for their
 joy
 "And found this horrible stone full-tide: 60
 "Yet I see just a thread escape, deploy
 "Through the evening-country, silent and
 safe,
 "And it suffers no more till it finds the
 sea."
 Or else I would think, "Perhaps some
 night
 "When new things happen, a meteor-
 ball
 "May slip through the sky in a line of
 light,
 "And earth breathe hard, and land-
 marks fall,
 "And my waves no longer champ nor
 chafe,
 "Since a stone will have rolled from its
 place: let be!"

IV.

But, dead! All's done with: wait who 70
 may,
 Watch and wear and wonder who will.
 Oh, my whole life that ends to-day!
 Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
 "The woman is dead that was none of his,
 "And the man that was none of hers
 may go!"
 There's only the past left: worry that!
 Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
 Rage, its late wearer is laughing at!
 Tear the collar to rags, having missed
 his throat;
 Strike stupidly on — "This, this and this, 80
 "Where I would that a bosom received
 the blow!"

V.

I ought to have done more: once my speech,
And once your answer, and there, the
end,

And Edith was henceforth out of reach!
Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, losing their arms, stare fate in the
face.

Why, better even have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and
brief:

10 Then changed to myself again — "I
slew

"Myself in that moment; a ruffian lies
"Somewhere: your slave, see, born in
his place!"

VI.

What did the other do? You be judge!
Look at us, Edith! Here are we both!
Give him his six whole years: I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in advance
Of me who could overtake and pass.

20 But, as if he loved you! No, not he,
Nor anyone else in the world, 'tis plain:
Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
Poured life out, proffered it — "Half a
glance

"Of those eyes of yours and I drop the
glass!"

VII.

Handsome, were you? 'Tis more than
they held,
More than they said; I was 'ware and
watched:

I was the scapegrace, this rat belled
The cat, this fool got his whiskers
scratched:

'The others? No head that was turned, no
heart

30 Broken, my lady, assure yourself!
Each soon made his mind up; so and so
Married a dancer, such and such
Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
Or maundered, unable to do as much,
And muttered of peace where he had no
part:

While, hid in the closet, laid on the
shelf, —

VIII.

On the whole, you were let alone, I think!
So, you looked to the other, who ac-
quiesced;

My rival, the proud man, — prize your
pink

40 Of poets! A poet he was! I've guessed:
He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
Loved you and doved you — did not I
laugh!

There was a prize! But we both were
tried.

Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with
her mark,

Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
Scorned! See, I bleed these tears in the
dark

Till comfort come and the last be bled:
He? He is tagging your epitaph.

IX.

If it would only come over again!

Time to be patient with me, and probe 50

This heart till you punctured the proper
vein,

Just to learn what blood is: twitch the
robe

From that blank lay-figure your fancy
draped,

Prick the leathern heart till the -- verses
spirt!

And late it was easy; late, you walked
Where a friend might meet you; Edith's
name

Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked;
If I heard good news, you heard the
same;

When I woke, I knew that your breath
escaped;

I could hide my time, keep alive, alert. 60

X.

And alive I shall keep and long, you will
see!

I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool; what cared he
So long as he picked from the filth his
prog?

He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth year.

But I will live otherwise: none of such
life!

At once I begin as I mean to end.
Go on with the world, get gold in its
strife,

Give your spouse the slip and betray 7
your friend!

There are two who decline, a woman and I,
And enjoy our death in the darkness
here.

XI.

I liked that way you had with your curls
Wound to a ball in a net behind:

Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-girl's
And your mouth — there was never, to
my mind,

Such a funny mouth, for it would not shut;
And the dented chin too — what a chin!

There were certain ways when you spoke,
some words

That you knew you never could pro-
nounce:

You were thin, however; like a bird's

Your hand seemed — some would say,
the pounce!
Of a scaly-footed hawk — all but!
The world was right when it called you
thin.

XII.

But I turn my back on the world: I
take

Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my lips.
Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake

Thirst at your presence! Fear no slips:
'Tis your slave shall pay, while his soul
endures.

Full due, love's whole debt, *summum jus*.
My queen shall have high observance,
planned

Courtship made perfect, no least line
Crossed without warrant. There you
stand,

Warm too, and white too: would this
wine

Had washed all over that body of yours,
Ere I drank it, and you down with it,
thus!

ABT VOGLER.

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORISING
UPON THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF
HIS INVENTION.)

[The Abbé Vogler, born 1749. Court
Chaplain at Mannheim. Improved the
organ. Visited London, 1790. Died at
Darmstadt, 1814.]

I.

Would that the structure brave, the mani-
fold music I build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys
to their work,

Claiming each slave of the sound, at a
touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of
demons that lurk,

Man, brute, reptile, fly, — alien of end and
of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-
high, hell-deep removed, —

Should rush into sight at once as he named
the ineffable Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to pleas-
ure the princess he loved!

II.

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful
building of mine,

This which my keys in a crowd pressed
and importuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would
dispart now and now combine,

* Taken

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten
their master his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a blind
plunge down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on the
roots of things,

Then up again swim into sight, having
based me my palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the
nether springs.

III.

And another would mount and march, like
the excellent minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd
but with many a crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as trans-
parent as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place
to the rest:

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips
with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a
festal night —

Outlining round and round Rome's dome
from space to spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the
pride of my soul was in sight.

IV.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was
certain, to match man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an
impulse as I;

And the emulous heaven yearned down,
made effort to reach the earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my
passion, to scale the sky:

Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar
and dwelt with mine,

Not a point nor peak but found and
fixed its wandering star;

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they
did not pale nor pine,

For earth had attained to heaven, there
was no more near nor far.

V.

Nay more; for there wanted not who
walked in the glare and glow,

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh
from the Protoplast,

Furnished for ages to come, when a kind-
lier wind should blow,

Lured now to begin and live, in a house
to their liking at last;

Or else the wonderful Dead who have
passed through the body and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in
an old world worth their new:

What never had been, was now; what was,
as it shall be anon;

And what is, — shall I say, matched
both? for I was made perfect too.

VI.

All through my keys that gave their
sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its
wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think,
had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the
process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse —
still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear
how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience
to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-
list enrolled: —

VII.

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the
will that can,
10 Existent behind all laws, that made
them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be
allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a
fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in
itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world — loud,
soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in
my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen:
consider and bow the head!

VIII.

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I
reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the
praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can
say that he feared,
20 That he even gave it a thought, the gone
thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of
the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this
your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling
with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same
God: ay, what was, shall be.

IX.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the
ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not
made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who
art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart
that thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What
was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence 30
implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil,
so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.

X.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of
good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,
nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-
vives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of
an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic
for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose
itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and
the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall 40
hear it by-and-by.

XI.

And what is our failure here but a tri-
umph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we
withered or agonised?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that
singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that
harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow
to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of
the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers
in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis
we musicians know.

XII.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes
her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly 50
acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common
chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the
minor, — yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on
alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled
from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for
my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will
try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I.

GROW old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was
 made:
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith "A whole I planned,
 "Youth shows but half; trust God: see
 all nor be afraid!"

II.

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed "Which rose make
 ours,
 "Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
 "Mine be some figured flame which
 blends, transcends them all!"

III.

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a
 spark.

IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men;
 Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt
 the maw-crammed beast?

V.

Rejoice we are allied
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive!
 A spark disturbs our clod;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I
 must believe.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but
 go!
 Be our joys three-parts pain!
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
 grudge the throe!

VII.

For thence, — a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks, —
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me:
 A brute I might have been, but would not
 sink i' the scale.

VIII.

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs
 want play?
 To man, propose this test —
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its
 lone way?

IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use:
 I own the Past profuse
 Of power each side, perfection every
 turn:
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole;
 Should not the heart beat once "How good
 to live and learn?"

X.

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
 "I see the whole design,
 "I, who saw power, see now love perfect
 too:
 "Perfect I call Thy plan:
 "Thanks that I was a man!
 "Maker, remake, complete, — I trust
 what Thou shalt do!"

XI.

For pleasant is this flesh;
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for
 rest:
 Would we some prize might hold
 To match those manifold
 Possessions of the brute, — gain most, as
 we did best!

XII.

Let us not always say
 "Spite of this flesh to-day
 "I strove, made head, gained ground upon
 the whole!"
 As the bird wings and sings,
 Let us cry "All good things
 "Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,
 than flesh helps soul!"

XIII.

Therefore I, summon age
 To grant youth's heritage,
 Life's struggle having so far reached its
 term:
 Thence shall I pass, approved
 A man, for aye removed
 From the developed brute; a god though
 in the germ.

XIV.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and
new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to
indue.

XV.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know,
being old.

XVI.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots — "Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies
another day."

XVII.

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at
last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved
the Past."

XVIII.

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's
true play.

XIX.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught
found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age: wait death
nor be afraid!

XX.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand
thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let
thee feel alone.

XXI.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the
Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give
us peace at last!

XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall
my soul believe?

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the
price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value
in a trice:

XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled
the man's amount:

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and
escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the
pitcher shaped.

XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our
clay,
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past
gone, 'seize to-day!'"

XXVII.

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God
stand sure:

What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter
 and clay endure.

XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain
 arrest:
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently
 impressed.

XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves
 Which ran the laughing loves
 Around thy base, no longer pause and
 press?
 What though, about thy rim,
 Skull-things in order grim
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner
 stress?

XXX.

Look not thou down but up!
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trum-
 pet's peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips aglow!
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what
 need'st thou with earth's wheel?

XXXI.

But I need, now as then,
 Thee, God, who moulded men;
 And since, not even while the whirl was
 worst,
 Did I, — to the wheel of life
 With shapes and colours rife,
 Round dizzily, — mistake my end, to slake
 Thy thirst:

XXXII.

So, take and use Thy work:
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past
 the aim!
 My times be in Thy hand!
 Perfect the cup as planned!
 Let age approve of youth, and death com-
 plete the same!

A DEATH IN THE DESERT.

[SUSPOSED of Pamphylax the Antiochene:
 It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
 Hath three skins glued together, is all
 Greek
 And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu*:
 Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,

Stained and conserved with juice of tere-
 binth,
 Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi*,
 From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at
 peace:

Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.
 I may not write it, but I make a cross
 To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
 And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax.]

I said, "If one should wet his lips with
 wine,

"And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we
 find,

"Or else the lappet of a linen robe,

"Into the water-vessel, lay it right,

"And cool his forehead just above the eyes,

"The while a brother, kneeling either side,

"Should chafe each hand and try to make
 it warm, —

"He is not so far gone but he might
 speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
 Nor in the secret chamber of the rock
 Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
 We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
 And waited for his dying all the while;
 But in the midmost grotto: since noon's
 light

Reached there a little, and we would not lose

The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
 With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
 And brought him from the chamber in the
 depths,

And laid him in the light where we might
 see:

For certain smiles began about his mouth,
 And his lids moved, presageful of the end.
 Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the
 cave,

The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
 Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a
 goat

That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
 Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps
 alive:

So that if any thief or soldier passed,
 (Because the persecution was aware)
 Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
 Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,
 Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
 Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus, —
 dropped a drop;

I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
 Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy
 his left:

But Valens had bethought him, and pro-
 duced

And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.

Only, he did — not so much wake, as — turn

And smile a little, as a sleeper does

If any dear one call him, touch his face —
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:

It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees,
and ran,

10 Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,

And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead

Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,

"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:

Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
20 Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,

As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, "If a friend declared to me,
"This my son Valens, this my other son,
"Were James and Peter, — nay, declared as well

"This lad was very John, — I could believe!

"— Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:

"So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
"The soul retreated from the perished brain

"Whence it was wont to feel and use the world

30 "Through these dull members, done with long ago.

"Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:

"And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul:
first, to wit,

A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,

And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,

Grows into, and again is grown into 40
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth, — is what Knows:

Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is —
And leans upon the former, makes it play,

As that played off the first: and, tending 50
up,

Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man

Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man.

I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end to end;

"Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!

"Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself

"A little where the fire was: thus I urge
"The soul that served me, till it task once 60
more

"What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,

"And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,

"Trying to taste again the truth of things —"

(He smiled) — "their very superficial truth;

"As that ye are my sons, that it is long

"Since James and Peter had release by death,

"And I am only he, your brother John,
"Who saw and heard, and could remember all.

"Remember all! It is not much to say.
"What if the truth broke on me from above 70

"As once and oft-times? Such might happen again:

"Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,

"With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass,

"The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen —

"I who now shudder only and surmise
"How did your brother bear that sight and live?"

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love
"Through me to men: be nought but ashes here

"That keep awhile my semblance, who was John, —

- "Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
 "No one alive who knew (consider this!)
 "— Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
 "That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
 "How will it be when none more saith 'I saw'?
- "Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.
 "Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden teach,
 "I went, for many years, about the world,
 "Saying 'It was so; so I heard and saw,'
 10 "Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.
 "Afterward came the message to myself
 "In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
 "But simply listen, take a book and write,
 "Nor set down other than the given word,
 "With nothing left to my arbitrament
 "To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.
 "Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,
 "No call to write again, I found a way,
 "And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
 20 "Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe;
 "Or I would pen a letter to a friend
 "And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:
 "Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
 "But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
 "Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
 "To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
 "When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things;
 "Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I knew,'
 "And go all over the old ground again,
 30 "With Antichrist already in the world,
 "And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
 "Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
 "Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:
 "Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?
 "I never thought to call down fire on such,
 "Or, as in wonderful and early days,
 "Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
 "But patient stated much of the Lord's life
 "Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
 40 "Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
 "Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
 "Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
- "Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
 "Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
 "Of new significance and fresh result;
 "What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
 "And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
 "For men said, 'It is getting long ago:
 "Where is the promise of His coming?' — asked
 "These young ones in their strength, as so loth to wait,
 "Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
 "I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
 "Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
 "And, in the main, I think such men believed.
 "Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
 "Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
 "And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
 "Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
 "We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
 "Yet now I wake in such decrepitude 60
 "As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
 "Past even the presence of my former self,
 "Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
 "Till I am found away from my own world,
 "Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
 "Along with unborn people in strange lands,
 "Who say — I hear said or conceive they say —
 "Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
 "Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!
 "And how shall I assure them? Can they 70
 share
 "— They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
 "About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
 "Living and learning still as years assist
 "Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see —
 "With me who hardly am withheld at all,
 "But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
 "Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
 "Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 "We whom God loves? When pain ends gain ends too.
 "To me, that story — ay, that Life and 80
 Death
 "Of which I wrote 'it was' — to me, it is;

- Is, here and now: I apprehend
 nought else.
 "Is not God now i' the world His power
 first made?
 "Is not His love at issue still with sin,
 "Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
 "Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else
 around?
 "Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
 "To the right hand of the throne — what
 is it beside,
 "When such truth, breaking bounds, o'er-
 floods my soul,
 "And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
 10 "See I the need yet transiency of both,
 "The good and glory consummated
 thence?
 "I saw the power; I see the Love, once
 weak,
 "Resume the Power: and in this word 'I
 sec,'
 "Lo, there is recognised the Spirit of both
 "That moving o'er the spirit of man, un-
 blinks
 "His eye and bids him look. These are, I
 see;
 "But ye, the children, His beloved ones
 too,
 "Ye need, — as I should use an optic glass
 "I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the
 world,
 20 "It had been given a crafty smith to make;
 "A tube, he turned on objects brought too
 close,
 "Lying confusedly insubordinate
 "For the unassisted eye to master once:
 "Look through his tube, at distance now
 they lay,
 "Become succinct, distinct, so small, so
 clear!
 "Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what
 truth
 "I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
 "Diminished into clearness, proved a point
 "And far away: ye would withdraw your
 sense
 30 "From out eternity, strain it upon time,
 "Then stand before that fact, that Life
 and Death,
 "Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
 "As though a star should open out, all
 sides,
 "Grow the world on you, as it is my world.
 "For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
 "And hope and fear, — believe the aged
 friend, —
 "Is just our chance o' the prize of learning
 love,
 "How love might be, hath been indeed,
 and is;
 "And that we hold thenceforth to the utter-
 most
 40 "Such prize despite the envy of the world,
 "And, having gained truth, keep truth:
 that is all.
 "But see the double way wherein we are
 led,
 "How the soul learns diversely from the
 flesh!
 "With flesh, that hath so little time to
 stay,
 "And yields mere basement for the soul's
 emprise,
 "Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was
 the light,
 "And warmth was cherishing and food
 was choice
 "To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,
 "As now to yours and mine; the body
 sprang
 "At once to the height, and stayed: but 50
 the soul, — no!
 "Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
 "In Rome or Athens, may descry some
 point
 "Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;
 "And, as thereby the power's whole mass
 extends,
 "So much extends the æther floating o'er,
 "The love that tops the might, the Christ
 in God.
 "Then, as new lessons shall be learned in
 these
 "Till earth's work stop and useless time
 run out,
 "So duly, daily, needs provision be
 "For keeping the soul's prowess possible, 60
 "Building new barriers as the old decay,
 "Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
 "Putting the question ever, 'Does God
 love,
 "And will ye hold that truth against the
 world?'
 "Ye know there needs no second proof with
 good
 "Gained for our flesh from any earthly
 source:
 "We might go freezing, ages, — give us
 fire,
 "Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
 "And guard it safe through every chance,
 ye know!
 "That fable of Prometheus and his theft, 70
 "How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower,
 grows old
 "('I have been used to hear the pagans
 own)
 "And out of mind; but fire, howe'er its
 birth,
 "Here is it, precious to the sophist now
 "Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to
 scorn,
 "As precious to those satyrs of his play,
 "Who touched it in gay wonder at the
 thing.
 "While were it so with the soul, — this
 gift of truth

- "Once grasped, were this our soul's gain
safe, and sure
"To prosper as the body's gain is wont, —
"Why, man's probation would conclude,
his earth
"Crumble; for he both reasons and de-
cides,
"Weighs first, then chooses: will he give
up fire
"For gold or purple once he knows its
worth?
"Could he give Christ up were His worth
as plain?
"Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs
shift,
"Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
10 "And straightway in his life acknowledge
it,
"As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
"Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than
now?'
"To give you answer I am left alive;
"Look at me who was present from the
first!
"Ye know what things I saw; then came a
test,
"My first, befitting me who so had seen:
"Forsake the Christ thou sawest trans-
figured, Him
"Who trod the sea and brought the dead
to life?
"What should wring this from thee! —
ye laugh and ask.
20 "What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a
noise,
"The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
"And fear of what the Jews might do!
Just that,
"And it is written, 'I forsook and fled.'
"There was my trial, and it ended thus.
"Ay, but my soul had gained its truth,
could grow:
"Another year or two, — what little child,
"What tender woman that had seen no
least
"Of all my sights, but barely heard them
told,
"Who did not clasp the cross with a light
laugh,
30 "Or wrap the burning robe round, thank-
ing God?
"Well, was truth safe for ever, then?
Not so.
"Already had begun the silent work
"Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute
blaze,
"Might need love's eye to pierce the o'er-
stretched doubt.
"Teachers were busy, whispering 'All is
true
"As the aged ones report; but youth can
reach
"Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir
and strain,
- "And the full doctrine slumbers till to-
day.'
"Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear
was found,
"A bar to me who touched and handled 40
truth,
"Now proved the glozing of some new
shrewd tongue,
"This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
"Till imminent was the outcry 'Save our
Christ!'
"Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
"Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it
work.
"Such work done, as it will be, what
comes next?
"What do I hear say, or conceive men
say,
"Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!
"Is this indeed a burthen for late days, 50
"And may I help to bear it with you all,
"Using my weakness which becomes your
strength?
"For if a babe were born inside this grot,
"Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the
sun,
"Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's
place, —
"One loving him and wishful he should
learn,
"Would much rejoice himself was blinded
first.
"Month by month here, so made to under-
stand
"How eyes, born darkling, apprehend
amiss:
"I think I could explain to such a child 60
"There was more glow outside than gleams
he caught,
"Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe!'
"It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
"In latter days, new lands, or old grown
strange,
"Left without me, which must be very
soon.
"What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick
with it!
"I see you stand conversing, each new face,
"Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;
"Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico 70
"Out of the crowd in some enormous town
"Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
"Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and
sand
"Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
"And no one asks his fellow any more
"Where is the promise of His coming?'
but
"Was he revealed in any of His lives,
"As Power, as Love, as Influencing
Soul?"

- "Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
 "And let us ask and answer and be saved!
 "My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;
 "One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
 "Here is a tale of things done ages since;
 "What truth was ever told the second day?
 "Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.
 "Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love.
 "And what we love most, power and love in one,
 10 "Let us acknowledge on the record here,
 "Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?
 "Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?
 "Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
 "First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ —
 "A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
 "We had such love already in ourselves,
 "Knew first what else we should not recognise.
 "Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,
 "And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
 20 "Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;
 "He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's,
 "With shape, name, story added, man's old way.
 "How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?
 "Next try the power: He made and rules the world:
 "Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
 "Unless things have been ever as we see.
 "Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds
 "Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
 "Which only of itself now rises, sets,
 30 "As if a hand impelled it and a will, —
 "Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands:
 "But the new question's whisper is distinct,
 "Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?
 "We have the hands, the will; what made and drives
 "The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
 "While will and love we do know; marks of these,
- "Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare —
 "As that, to punish or reward our race,
 "The sun at undue times arose or set
 "Or else stood still: what do not men 41 affirm?
 "But earth requires as urgently reward
 "Or punishment to-day as years ago,
 "And none expects the sun will interpose:
 "Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
 "Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
 "Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;
 "Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
 "Man's! — which he gives, supposing he but finds,
 "As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
 "To help these in what forms he called his 51 gods.
 "First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
 "But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long;
 "As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
 "So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
 "What proveth God is otherwise at least?
 "All else, projection from the mind of man!
 "Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong
 "But place my gospel where I put my hands.
 "I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
 "That help, he needed once, and needs no 64 more,
 "Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
 "For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
 "This imports solely, man should mount on each
 "New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
 "The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
 "Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
 "Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
 "Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;
 "And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
 "You stick a garden-plot with ordered 74 twigs
 "To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
 "And check the careless step would spoil their birth;

- "But when herbs wave, the guardian
 twigs may go,
 "Since should ye doubt of virtues, question
 kinds,
 "It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
 "Which proved once underneath lay store
 of seed,
 "But to the hero's self by what light ye
 boast,
 "For what fruit's signs are. This book's
 fruit is plain,
 "Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 "Doth the fruit show? Then miracles
 bade 'ware
 "At first of root and stem, saved both till
 now
 10 "From trampling ox, rough boar and
 wanton goat.
 "What? Was man made a wheelwork
 to wind up,
 "And be discharged, and straight wound
 up anew?
 "No! — grown, his growth lasts; taught,
 he ne'er forgets:
 "May learn a thousand things, not twice
 the same.
 "This might be pagan teaching: now hear
 mine.
 "I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
 "Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 "So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with
 truth:
 "When they can eat, babe's-nurture is
 withdrawn.
 20 "I fed the babe whether it would or no:
 "I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
 "I cried once, 'That ye may believe in
 Christ,
 "Behold this blind man shall receive his
 sight!'
 "I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am*
shrewd
 "And smile at stories how John's word
 could cure —
 "Repeat that miracle and take my faith?'
 "I say, that miracle was duly wrought
 "When, save for it, no faith was possible.
 "Whether a change were wrought i' the
 shows o' the world,
 30 "Whether the change came from our
 minds which see
 "Of shows o' the world so much as and no
 more
 "Than God wills for His purpose, — (what
 do I
 "See now, suppose you, there where you
 see rock
 "Round us?) — I know not; such was
 the effect,
 "So faith grew, making void more miracles
 "Because too much: they would compel,
 not help.
- "I say, the acknowledgment of God in
 Christ
 "Accepted by thy reason, solves for
 thee
 "All questions in the earth and out of it,
 "And has so far advanced thee to be wise. 40
 "Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove
 the proved?
 "In life's mere minute, with power to use
 that proof,
 "Leave knowledge and revert to how it
 sprung?
 "Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!
 "For I say, this is death and the sole death,
 "When a man's loss comes to him from
 his gain,
 "Darkness from light, from knowledge
 ignorance,
 "And lack of love from love made mani-
 fest;
 "A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it
 chokes;
 "A stomach's when, surcharged with food, 50
 it starves.
 "With ignorance was surety of a cure.
 "When man, appalled at nature, ques-
 tioned first
 "What if there lurk a might behind this
 might?
 "He needed satisfaction God could give,
 "And did give, as ye have the written
 word:
 "But when he finds might still redouble
 might,
 "Yet asks, 'Since all is might, what use of
 will?'
 "— Will, the one source of might, — he
 being man
 "With a man's will and a man's might, to
 teach
 "In little how the two combine in large, — 60
 "That man has turned round on himself
 and stands,
 "Which in the course of nature is, to die.
 "And when man questioned, 'What if
 there be love
 "Behind the will and might, as real as
 they?' —
 "He needed satisfaction God could give,
 "And did give, as ye have the written word:
 "But when, beholding that love every-
 where,
 "He reasons, 'Since such love is every-
 where,
 "And since ourselves can love and would
 be loved,
 "We ourselves make the love, and Christ 70
 was not,' —
 "How shall ye help this man who knows
 himself,
 "That he must love and would be loved
 again,

- 'Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
 "Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
 "The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
 "Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.
 "If he rejoins, 'But this was all the while
 "'A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
 "'Thy story of the places, names and dates,
 "'Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
 "'— Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
 10 "Whence now the second suffers detriment.
 "'What good of giving knowledge if, because
 "'O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
 "'And why refuse what modicum of help
 "'Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
 "'I' the face of truth — truth absolute, uniform?
 "'Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
 "'Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
 "'And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
 "'Was this once, was it not once? — then and now
 20 "'And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
 "'Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
 "'Put question of his famous play again
 "'How for the ephemerals' sake Jove's fire was filched,
 "'And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
 "'*The fact is in the fable*, cry the wise,
 "'*Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,*
 "'*Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*
 "'As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
 "'Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
 30 "Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?"
 "I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
 "The very primal thesis, plainest law,
 "— Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
 "A master to obey, a course to take,
 "Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
 "Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
 "From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
- "From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
 "How could man have progression otherwise?
 "Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
 "No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'
 "Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
 "Man takes that title now if he believes
 "Might can exist with neither will nor love,
 "In God's case — what he names now Nature's Law —
 "While in himself he recognises love
 "No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
 "Since if man prove the sole existent thing
 "Where these combine, whatever their degree,
 "However weak the might or will or love, 50
 "So they be found there, put in evidence, —
 "He is as surely higher in the scale
 "Than any might with neither love nor will,
 "As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
 "(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
 "Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self —
 "Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!
 "Thus, man proves best and highest — God, in fine,
 "And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
 "The gain to loss, best rise to the worst 60
 fall,
 "His life becomes impossible, which is death.
 "But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
 "He is mere man, and in humility
 "Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
 "I point to the immediate consequence
 "And say, by such confession straight he falls
 "Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
 "Made to know that he can know and not more:
 "Lower than God who knows all and can all,
 "Higher than beasts which know and can 70
 so far
 "As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
 "Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
 "While man knows partly but conceives beside,
 "Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
 "And in this striving, this converting air
 "Into a solid he may grasp and use,
 "Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,

"Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,

"Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

"Such progress could no more attend his soul

"Were all it struggles after found at first

"And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,

"Than motion wait his body, were all else

"Than it the solid earth on every side,

"Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.

"Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect

"He could not, what he knows now, know at first;

"What he considers that he knows to-day,

"Come but to-morrow, he will find mis-known;

"Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns

"Because he lives, which is to be a man,

"Set to instruct himself by his past self:

"First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,

"Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,

"Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.

"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth

20 "And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,

"As midway help till he reach fact indeed.

"The statuary ere he mould a shape

"Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next

"The aspiration to produce the same;

"So, taking clay, he calls his shape there-out,

"Cries ever 'Now I have the thing I see':

"Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,

"From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.

"How were it had he cried 'I see no face,

30 "No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay'?

"Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,

"And laughed 'It is my shape and lives again!'

"Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,

"Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed

"In what is still flesh-imitating clay.

"Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!

"God only makes the live shape at a jet.

"Will ye renounce this pact of creature-ship?

"The pattern on the Mount subsists no more.

40 "Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;

"But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,

"Serve still and are replaced as time requires:

"By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!

"If ye demur, this judgment on your head,

"Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,

"Indulging every instinct of the soul

"There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

"Such is the burthen of the latest time.

"I have survived to hear it with my ears,

"Answer it with my lips: does this suffice? 50

"For if there be a further woe than such,

"Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,

"So long as any pulse is left in mine,

"May I be absent even longer yet,

"Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,

"Though I should tarry a new hundred years!"

But he was dead; 'twas about noon, the day

Somewhat declining: we five buried him

That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,

And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus. 60

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.

Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;

The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,

And could not write nor speak, but only loved:

So, lest the memory of this go quite,

Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,

I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!

For many look again to find that face,

Beloved John's to whom I ministered,

Somewhere in life about the world; they 70

err:

Either mistaking what was darkly spoke

At ending of his book, as he relates,

Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech

Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.

Believe ye will not see him any more

About the world with his divine regard!

For all was as I say, and now the man

Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

"If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men, 80

"Mere man, the first and best but nothing more, —

"Account Him, for reward of what He was,

"Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
 "For see; Himself conceived of life as love,
 "Conceived of love, as what must enter in,
 "Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved:

"Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.

"Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.

"But by this time are many souls set free,
 "And very many still retained alive:

"Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile

10 "Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)

"See if, for every finger of thy hands,

"There be not found, that day the world shall end,

"Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word

"That He will grow incorporate with all,

"With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,

"Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?

"Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.

"Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
 "Or lost!"

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND.

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

20 "WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,

Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
 With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.

And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,

And feels about his spine small eft-things course,

Run in and cut each arm, and make him laugh:

And while above his head a pompion-plant,
 Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,

Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,

30 And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
 And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch, —

He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross

And recross till they weave a spider-web
 (Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)

And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
 Touching that other, whom his dam called

God.

Because to talk about Him, vexes — ha,
 Could He but know! and time to vex is now,

When talk is safer than in winter-time.

Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep

In confidence he drudges at their task, 40

And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,

Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,

But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
 Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such

as that:

Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,

And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease: 50

He hated that He cannot change His cold,
 Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish

That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,

And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine

O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
 A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of

wave;

Only, she ever sickened; found repulse
 At the other kind of water, not her life,

(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)

Flounced back from bliss she was not born 60

to breathe,
 And in her old bounds buried her despair,

Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,

Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;

Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
 That floats and feeds; a certain badger

brown

He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye

By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue

That pricks deep into oakwarts for a 70

worm,
 And says a plain word when she finds her prize,

But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves

That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
 About their hole — He made all these and

more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
 He could not, Himself, make a second self
 To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
 He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
 An eyeseore to Him, or not worth His pains:
 But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
 Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be —
 Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
 Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
 Things He admires and mocks too, — that is it.
 Because, so brave, so better though they be,
 It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
 Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
 And honey-comb and pods, I have perceived,
 Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss, —
 Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
 Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
 Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
 And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
 Put case, unable to be what I wish,
 I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
 Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
 Able to fly? — for, there, see, he hath wings,
 And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
 And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
 There, and I will that he begin to live,
 Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
 Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
 Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
 In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
 And he lay stupid-like, — why, I should laugh;
 And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
 Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
 Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again, —
 Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
 Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
 And give the mankin three sound legs for one,
 Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
 And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
 Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
 Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
 Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
 Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord,
 'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
 That march now from the mountain to the sea;
 'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
 Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
 'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
 Shall join the file. one pincer twisted off; 50
 'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
 And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
 As it likes me each time, I do: so He.
 Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
 Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
 But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
 Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
 And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
 Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
 That they, unless through Him, do nought 60 at all,
 And must submit: what other use in things?
 'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
 That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
 When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
 Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
 Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
 Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
 "I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
 "I make the cry my maker cannot make
 "With his great round mouth; he must 70 blow through mine!"
 Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.
 But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
 Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
 What knows, — the something over Setebos
 That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought.
 Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
 There may be something quiet o'er His head,

Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.

I joy because the quails come; would not joy

Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:

This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.

It may look up, work up, — the worse for those

It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos

10 The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,

Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar

To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite

Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.

'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.

Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books.

Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:

20 Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves,
arrow-shaped,

Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;

Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;

Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple opcelot;

And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,

A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,

Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,

And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane

30 He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;

Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,

And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge

In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.

'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taket his mirth with make-believes:

so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.

40 Who made them weak, meant weakness
He might vex.

Had He meant other, while His hand was in,

Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,

Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,

Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,

Like an orc's armour? Ay, — so spoil His sport!

He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.

Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?

'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast

Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,

But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate

Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.

Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,

By no means for the love of what is worked.

'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world

When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,

And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,

Than trying what to do with wit and strength.

'Falls to make something: 'piled yon 6 pile of turfs,

And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,

And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,

And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,

Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.

No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;

'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!

One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.

He hath a spite against me, that I know. 70

Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?

So it is, all the same, as well I find.

'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm

With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,

Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,

Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large
tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat: so much
for spite.

Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the
shade:

Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this? — What
Prosper does?

Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
'There is the sport: discover how or 'die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the
isle

Some flee afar, some dive, some run up
trees;

Those at His mercy, — why, they please
Him most

When . . . when . . . well, never try the
same way twice!

Repeat what act has pleased, He may
grow wroth.

You must not know His ways, and play
Him off,

Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears

But steals the nut from underneath my
thumb,

And when I threat, bites stoutly in de-
fence:

'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways
please.

But what would move my choler more
than this,

That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days to
come,

Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
"Because he did so yesterday with me,

"And otherwise with such another brute,
"So must he do henceforth and always." —

Ay?

Would teach the reasoning couple what
"must" means!

'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord?
So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him

So long as He lives, keeps His strength:
no change,

If He have done His best, make no new
world

To please Him more, so leave off watching
this, —

If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day, — or, suppose, grow

into it

As Grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted
friends:

Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through
pain,

Saving last pain for worst, — with which,
an end.

Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,

Yonder two flies, with purple films and 50
pink,

Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills
both.

'Sees two black painful beetles roll their
ball

On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to
clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive,
suppose

This Caliban strives hard and ails no less
And always, above all else, envies Him;

Wherefore he mainly dances on dark
nights,

Moans in the sun, gets under holes to
laugh,

And never speaks his mind save housed 60
as now:

Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught
me here,

O'erheard this speech, and asked "What
chucklest at?"

'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,

Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:

While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "What I hate, be consecrate

"To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
"For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?" 70

Hoping the while, since evils sometimes
mend,

Warts rub away and sores are cured with
slime,

That some strange day, will either the
Quiet catch

And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world
at once!

Crickets stop hissing; not a bird — or, yes,
There scuds His raven that has told Him

all!

It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha!
The wind

Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house 80
o' the move,

And fast invading fires begin! White
blaze —

A tree's head snaps — and there, there,
 there, there, there,
 His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
 Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper
 lip,
 Will let those quails fly, will not eat this
 month
 One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape !]

CONFESSIONS.

I.

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
 "Now that I come to die,
 "Do I view the world as a vale of tears?"
 10 Ah, reverend sir, not I!

II.

What I viewed there once, what I view
 again
 Where the physic bottles stand
 On the table's edge, — is a suburb lane,
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

III.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
 From a house you could descry
 O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
 Or green to a healthy eye?

IV.

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
 20 Blue above lane and wall;
 And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"
 Is the house o'ertopping all.

V.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
 There watched for me, one June,
 A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
 My poor mind's out of tune.

VI.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
 Close by the side, to dodge
 Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
 30 They styled their house "The Lodge."

VII.

What right had a loungeur up their lane?
 But, by creeping very close,
 With the good wall's help, — their eyes
 might strain
 And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII.

Yet never catch her and me together,
 As she left the attic, there,
 By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"
 And stole from stair to stair,

IX.

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate.
 Alas,
 We loved, sir — used to meet:
 How sad and bad and mad it was —
 But then, how it was sweet!

MAY AND DEATH.

I.

I WISH that when you died last May,
 Charles, there had died along with you
 Three parts of spring's delightful things;
 Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
 There must be many a pair of friends
 Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
 Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III.

So, for their sake, be May still May!
 Let their new time, as mine of old,
 Do all it did for me: I bid
 Sweet sights and sounds throng mani-
 fold.

IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
 Woods have in May, that starts up green
 Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
 Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves be-
 tween, —

V.

That, they might spare; a certain wood
 Might miss the plant; their loss were
 small:
 But I, — whene'er the leaf grows there,
 Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

DEAF AND DUMB.

A GROUP BY WOOLNER.

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows aright
 The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
 Into the jewelled bow from blankest white;
 So may a glory from defect arise:
 Only by Deafness may the vexed Love
 wreak
 Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
 Only by Dumbness adequately speak
 As favoured mouth could never, through
 the eyes.

PROSPICE.

FEAR death? — to feel the fog in my
 throat,
 The mist in my face,

When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe;
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
 The best and the last!
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes
 and forbore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like
 my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS.

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON.

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes,
 the brow!
 Let them once more absorb me! One look now
 Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
 Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
 Hold me but safe again within the bond
 Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
 Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
 Denied, — no past is mine, no future: look at me!

YOUTH AND ART.

I.

It once might have been, once only:
 We lodged in a street together,
 You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
 I' a lone she-bird of his feather.

II.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
 You thumbed, thrust, patted and 40
 polished,
 Then laughed "They will see some day
 "Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

III.

My business was song, song, song;
 I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
 "Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
 "And Grisi's existence embittered!"

IV.

I earned no more by a warble
 Than you by a sketch in plaster;
 You wanted a piece of marble,
 I needed a music-master. 50

V.

We studied hard in our styles,
 Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
 For air looked out on the tiles,
 For fun watched each other's windows.

VI.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
 Cap and blouse — nay, a bit of beard too;
 Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
 With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII.

And I — soon managed to find
 Weak points in the flower-fence facing, 60
 Was forced to put up a blind
 And be safe in my corset-lacing.

VIII.

No harm! It was not my fault
 If you never turned your eye's tail up
 As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
 Or ran the chromatic scale up:

IX.

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
 And the boys and girls gave guesses,
 And stalls in our street looked rare
 With bulrush and watercresses. 70

X.

Why did not you pinch a flower
 In a pellet of clay and fling it?
 Why did not I put a power
 Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI.

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
 (And yet the memory rankles)
 When models arrived, some minx
 Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles,

XII.

But I think I gave you as good!
 "That foreign fellow, — who can know
 "How she pays, in a playful mood,
 "For his tuning her that piano?"

XIII.

Could you say so, and never say
 "Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
 "And I fetch her from over the way,
 "Her piano, and long tunes and short
 tunes?"

XIV.

No, no; you would not be rash,
 10 Nor I rasher and something over:
 You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
 And Grisi yet lives in clover.

XV.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
 I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
 I've married a rich old lord,
 And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

XVI.

Each life unfulfilled, you see;
 It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
 We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
 20 Starved, feasted, despaired, — been
 happy.

XVII.

And nobody calls you a dunce,
 And people suppose me clever:
 This could but have happened once,
 And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE.

If one could have that little head of hers
 Painted upon a background of pale gold,
 Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
 No shade encroaching on the matchless
 mould
 Of those two lips, which should be opening
 soft
 30 In the pure profile; not as when she
 laughs,
 For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
 Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its
 staff's
 Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
 And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
 Then her lithe neck, three fingers might
 surround,
 How it should waver on the pale gold
 ground
 Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
 I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
 Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
 40 Breaking its outline, burning shades
 absorb:

But these are only massed there, I should
 think,
 Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
 Grow out, stand full, fade slow against
 the sky
 (That's the pale ground you'd see this
 sweet face by),
 All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into
 one eye
 Which fears to lose the wonder, should it
 wink.

A LIKENESS.

SOME people hang portraits up
 In a room where they dine or sup:
 And the wife clinks tea-things under,
 And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
 Asks, "Who was the lady, I wonder?"
 "Tis a daub John bought at a sale,"
 Quoth the wife, — looks black as thun-
 der:
 "What a shade beneath her nose!
 "Snuff-taking, I suppose, —"
 Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.
 Or else, there's no wife in the case,
 But the portrait's queen of the place,
 Alone 'mid the other spoils
 Of youth, — masks, gloves and foils,
 And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
 And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
 And the cast from a fist ("not, alas! mine,
 "But my master's, the Tipton Slasher"),
 And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
 And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
 And the chammois-horns ("shot in the
 Chablais")
 And prints — Rarey drumming on
 Cruiser,
 And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
 And the little edition of Rabelais:
 Where a friend, with both hands in his
 pockets,
 May saunter up close to examine it,
 And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb
 in it,
 "But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
 "That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
 "But they've made the girl's nose a pro-
 boscis:
 "Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
 "What, is not she Jane? Then, who is
 she?"
 All that I own is a print,
 An etching, a mezzotint;
 'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
 Yet a fact (take my conviction)
 Because it has more than a hint
 Of a certain face, I never
 Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
 In women I've seen the face of:
 Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
 Fifty in one portfolio.
 When somebody tries my claret,
 We turn round chairs to the fire,
 Chirp over days in a garret,
 Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
 Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
 Talk about pencil and lyre,
 And the National Portrait Gallery:
 Then I exhibit my treasure.
 After we've turned over twenty,
 And the debt of wonder my crony owes
 Is paid to my Marc Antonios,¹
 He stops me — "*Festina lentè!*"
 "What's that sweet thing there, the etch-
 ing?"
 How my waistcoat-strings want stretch-
 ing,
 How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,
 How my heart leaps! But hearts, after
 leaps, ache.
 "By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
 "That other, you praised, of Volpato's."'
 The fool! would he try a flight further and
 say —
 He never saw, never before to-day,
 What was able to take his breath away,
 A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
 With the dream of, meet death with, —
 why, I'll not engage
 But that, half in a rapture and half in a
 rage,
 I should toss him the thing's self — "'Tis
 only a duplicate,
 "A thing of no value! Take it, I suppli-
 cate!"

MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM."

Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just
 this once!
 This was the first and only time, I'll
 swear, —
 Look at me, — see, I kneel, — the only
 time,
 I swear, I ever cheated, — yes, by the soul
 Of Her who hears — (your sainted mother,
 sir!)
 All, except this last accident, was truth —
 This little kind of slip! — and even this,
 It was your own wine, sir, the good cham-
 pagne,
 (I took it for Catawba, you're so kind)
 Which put the folly in my head!

"Get up?"

You still inflict on me that terrible face?
 You show no mercy? — Not for Her dear
 sake,
 The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even
 now
 : Engravers, held in repute by collectors.

Blows on my cheek — (don't you feel some-
 thing, sir?)
 You'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
 What such a rowdy chooses to . . .
 Aie — aie — aie!
 Please, sir! your thumbs are through my
 windpipe, sir!
 Ch — ch!

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
 Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
 When your departed mother spoke those
 words
 Of peace through me, and moved you, sir,
 so much,
 You gave me — (very kind it was of you) 50
 These shirt-studs — (better take them
 back again,
 Please, sir) — yes, little did I think so
 soon
 A trifle of trick, all through a glass too
 much
 Of his own champagne, would change
 my best of friends
 Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 'twas wrong.
 I don't contest the point; your anger's just:
 Whatever put such folly in my head,
 I know 'twas wicked of me. There's a
 thick
 Dusk undeveloped spirit (I've observed)
 Owes me a grudge — a negro's, I should 60
 say,
 Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself
 Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
 When we had summoned Franklin to clear
 up
 A point about those shares i' the telegraph:
 Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom
 Paine? . . .
 Thumping the table close by where I
 crouched,
 He'd do me soon a mischief: that's come
 true!
 Why, now your face clears! I was sure it
 would!
 Then, this one time . . . don't take your
 hand away,
 Through yours I surely kiss your mother's 70
 hand . . .
 You'll promise to forgive me? — or, at
 least,
 Tell nobody of this? Consider, sir!
 What harm can mercy do? Would but
 the shade
 Of the venerable dead-one just vouchsafe
 A rap or tip! What bit of paper's here?
 Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
 Make the least sign, she urges on her child
 Forgiveness? There now! Eh? Oh!
 'Twas your foot,
 And not a natural creak, sir?

Answer, then!

Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I'm waiting to say "thrice!"

All to no use? No sort of hope for me? It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper?

What? If I told you all about the tricks? Upon my soul! — the whole truth, and nought else,

And how there's been some falsehood — for your part,

Will you engage to pay my passage out, And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board?

10 England's the place, not Boston — no offence!

I see what makes you hesitate: don't fear! I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,

Yes, this time really it's upon my soul! Be my salvation! — under Heaven, of course.

I'll tell some queer things. Sixty V's must do.

A trifle, though, to start with! We'll refer The question to this table?

How you're changed!

Then split the difference; thirty more, we'll say.

Ay, but you leave my presents! Else I'll swear

20 'Twas all through those: you wanted yours again,

So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back!

Tread on a worm, it turns, sir! If I turn, Your fault! 'Tis you'll have forced me!

Who's obliged

To give up life yet try no self-defence?

At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh?

Done!

May I sit, sir? This dear old table, now! Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar! I've been so happy with you! Nice stuffed chairs,

And sympathetic sideboards; what an end 30 To all the instructive evenings! (It's alright.)

Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.

Here goes, — but keep your temper, or I'll scream!

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-liddle-ol!

You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine;

It's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk! You're prigs, — excuse me, — like to look so sly,

So clever, while you cling by half a claw To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,

Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch

Because you chose it, so it must be safe. 44 Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough! You

spy

Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,

Wanting real foothold, — who can't keep upright

On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:

There's no outwitting you respecting him! For instance, men love money — that, you know

And what men do to gain it: well, suppose A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,

Listening at keyholes, hears the company Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so 50

forth,

How hard they are to get, how good to hold,

How much they buy, — if, suddenly, in pops he —

"I've got a V-note!" — what do you say to him?

What's your first word which follows your last kick?

"Where did you steal it, rascal?" That's because

He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,

Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir, Elected your parade-ground: let him try

Lies to the end of the list, — "He picked it up,

"His cousin died and left it him by will, 60 "The president flung it to him, riding by,

"An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair, "He dreamed of luck and found his shoe

enriched, "He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold" —

How would you treat such possibilities? Would not you, prompt, investigate the case

With cow-hide? "Lies, lies, lies," you'd shout: and why?

Which of the stories might not prove mere truth?

This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin!

Let's see, now, give him me to speak for 70 him!

How many of your rare philosophers, In plaguy books I've had to dip into,

Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made

And made it? Oh, with such philosophers You're on your best behaviour! While the

lad —

With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods, Nor doubt a moment how he got his

prize:

In his case, you hear, judge and execute, All in a breath: so would most men of

sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand

At the same keyhole, you and company,
Of signs and wonders, the invisible world;
How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
More than our vulgarest credulity;
How good men have desired to see a ghost,
What Johnson used to say, what Wesley
did,

Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-
dee:—

If he break in with, "Sir, I saw a ghost!"

o Ah, the ways change! He finds you perched
and prim;

It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may be:
There's no talk now of cow-hide. "Tell
it out!

"Don't fear us! Take your time and
recollect!

"Sit down first: try a glass of wine, my
boy!

"And, David, (is not that your Christian
name?)

"Of all things, should this happen twice —
it may —

"Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us
know!"

Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab
that,

Break down in the other, as beginners will?

20 All's candour, all's considerateness —
"No haste!

"Pause and collect yourself! We under-
stand!

"That's the bad memory, or the natural
shock,

"Or the unexplained *phenomena*!"

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace; finds, never
fear,

The readiest way to ope your own heart
wide,

Show — what I call your peacock-perch,
pet post

To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk
upon!

"Just as you thought, much as you might
expect!

"There be more things in heaven and
earth, Horatio," . . .

30 And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
Grow bolder, stroke you down at quick-
ened rate?

If he ruffle a feather, it's "Gently, patiently!"
"Manifestations are so weak at first!

"Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all
short,

"Cures with a vengeance!"

There, sir, that's your style!

You and your boy — such pains bestowed
on him,

Or any headpiece of the average worth,

To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him
apace,

Make him a Person ("Porson?" thank
you, sir!)

Much more, proficient in the art of lies. 4:

You never leave the lesson! Fire alight,
Catch you permitting it to die! You've

friends;
There's no withholding knowledge, —
least from those

Apt to look elsewhere for their souls'
supply:

Why should not you parade your lawful
prize?

Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition, — he henceforth

Gives it his name, grows notable: how
much more,

Who ferrets out a "medium"? David's
yours,

"You highly-favoured man? Then, pity 5c
souls

"Less privileged! Allow us share your
luck!"

So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass

ball,
Sets to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise —

Though I say, "lies" all these, at this first
stage,

'Tis just for science' sake: I call such
grubs

By the name of what they'll turn to,
dragonflies.

Strictly, it's what good people style untruth;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown 6a

thing:
It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-
work —

What never meant to be so very bad —
The knack of story-telling, brightening up

Each dull old bit of fact that drops its
shine.

One does see somewhat when one shuts
one's eyes,

If only spots and streaks; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves: and pens,

good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive
you?

'Tis but a foot in the water and out again;
Not that duck-under which decides your 7i

dive.
Note this, for it's important: listen why.

I'll prove, you push on David till he dives
And ends the shivering. Here's your

circle, now:
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you

their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,

- "Lord, who'd have thought it!" But
there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, sub-
mits
"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
"But—do you feel so certain of that
boy's?
"Really, I wonder! I confess myself
"More chary of my faith!" That's
galling, sir!
What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all's done? Then, you just have
shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down
David whole,
10 You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
And doubled besides; once more, "He
heard, we heard,
"You and they heard, your mother and
your wife,
"Your children and the stranger in your
gates:
"Did they or did they not?" So much for
him,
The black sheep, guest without the wed-
ding-garb,
The doubting Thomas! Now's your turn
to crow:
"He's kind to think you such a fool:
Sludge cheats?
"Leave you alone to take precautions!"
Straight
20 The rest join chorus. Thomas stands
abashed,
Sips silent some such beverage as this,
Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
And gulping David in good fellowship,
Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
Some just as tough a morsel. Over the
way,
Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it
better there?
Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-
scenes,
And Mexican War exploits to swallow
plump
30 If you'd be free o' the stove-side, rocking-
chair,
And trio of affable daughters?
Doubt succumbs!
Victory! All your circle's yours again!
Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
David's performance rounds, each chink
gets patched,
Every protrusion of a point's filed fine,
All's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
And then return to David finally,
Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-
inch.
Here's a choice birth o' the supernatural,
40 Poor David's pledged to! You've em-
ployed no tool.
- That laws exclaim at, save the devil's
own,
Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling
you
To the top o' your bent, — all out of one
half-lie!
You hold, if there's one half or a hundredth
part
Of a lie, that's his fault, — his be the
penalty!
I dare say! You'd prove firmer in his
place?
You'd find the courage, — that first flurry
over,
That mild bit of romancing-work at end, —
To interpose with "It gets serious, this;
"Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at 50
all.
"Inform your friends I made . . . well,
fools of them,
"And found you ready-made. I've lived
in clover
"These three weeks: take it out in kicks
of me!"
I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let me
know,
Twelve months hence, with how few em-
bellishments
You've told almighty Boston of this pas-
sage
Of arms between us, your first taste o' the
foil
From Sludge who could not fence, sir!
Sludge, your boy!
I lied, sir, — there! I got up from my
gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred 60
Your canvas-backs: I took their carver's
size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week found
myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizen-
ed smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from its hole, inch after
inch,
"How last night, I no sooner snug in bed, 70
"Tucked up, just as they left me, — than
came raps!
"While a light whisked" . . . "Shaped
somewhat like a star?"
"Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am." —
"So we thought!
"And any voice? Not yet? Try hard,
next time,
"If you can't hear a voice; we think you
may:
"At least, the Pennsylvanian 'mediums'
did."

Oh, next time comes the voice! "Just as we hoped!"
Are not the hoppers proud now, pleased,
profuse
O' the natural acknowledgment?

Of course!

So, off we push, illy-oh yo, trim the boat,
On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
We're midway to the Horseshoe: stop, who
can,
The dance of bubbles gay about our prow!
Experiences become worth waiting for,
Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost
mind,

And compliment the "medium" properly,
Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,
See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask
yourself

How you'd receive a course of treats like
these!

Why, take the quietest hack and stall him
up,

Cram him with corn a month, then out with
him

Among his mates on a bright April morn,
With the turf to tread; see if you find or no
A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!

Much more a youth whose fancies sprout
as rank

As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'Tis
soon,

"Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and
carry,

"Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang
yourself!"

I'm spared all further trouble; all's
arranged;

Your circle does my business; I may rave
Like an epileptic dervish in the books,
Foam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to
shreds;

No matter: lovers, friends and countrymen
Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong
things right

By the rule o' reverse. If Francis Verulam
so Styles himself Bacon, spells the name
beside

With a y and a k, says he drew breath in
York,

Gave up the ghost in Wales when Crom-
well reigned,

(As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to
say,

Before I found the useful book that knows)
Why, what harm's done? The circle
smiles apace,

"It was not Bacon, after all, you see!

"We understand; the trick's but natural:

"Such spirits' individuality

"Is hard to put in evidence: they incline

To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.

"You see, their world's much like a jail
broke loose,

"While this of ours remains shut, bolted,
barred,

"With a single window to it. Sludge, our
friend,

"Serves as this window, whether thin or
thick,

"Or stained or stainless; he's the medium-
pane

"Through which, to see us and be seen,
they peep:

"They crowd each other, hustle for a
chance,

"Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play
tricks enough!

"Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve
aside?

"Up in his place jumps Barnum — 'I'm 54
your man,

"I'll answer you for Bacon! Try once
more!"

Or else it's — "What's a 'medium'?
He's a means,

"Good, bad, indifferent, still the only
means

"Spirits can speak by; he may misconceive,

"Stutter and stammer, — he's their Sludge
and drudge,

"Take him or leave him; they must hold
their peace,

"Or else, put up with having knowledge
strained

"To half-expression through his ignorance.

"Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to
shed

"New music he's brimful of; why, he 6
turns

"The handle of this organ, grinds with
Sludge,

"And what he poured in at the mouth o'
the mill

"As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now!)

"Comes from the hopper as bran-new
Sludge, nought else,

"The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural
F,

"Or the 'Stars and Stripes' set to con-
secutive fourths."

Sir, where's the scrape you did not help me
through,

You that are wise? And for the fools, the
folk

Who came to see, — the guests, (observe
that word!)

Pray do you find guests criticise your wine, 70
Your furniture, your grammar, or your
nose?

Then, why your "medium"? What's the
difference?

Prove your madeira red-ink and gam-
boge, —

Your Sludge, a cheat — then, somebody's
a goose

For vaunting both as genuine. "Guests!"
 Don't fear!
 They'll make a wry face, nor too much of
 that,
 And leave you in your glory.

"No, sometimes
 "They doubt and say as much!" Ay,
 doubt they do!
 And what's the consequence? "Of course
 they doubt" —

(You triumph) "that explains the hitch at
 once!"

"Doubt posed our 'medium,' puddled his
 pure mind;

"He gave them back their rubbish: pitch
 chaff in,

"Could flour come out o' the honest
 mill?" So, prompt

30 Applaud the faithful: cases flock in point,
 "How, when a mocker willed a 'medium'
 once

"Should name a spirit James whose name
 was George,

"James" cried the 'medium,' — 'twas the
 test of truth!"

In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves
 more.

Does this convince? The better: does it
 fail?

Time for the double-shotted broadside,
 then —

The grand means, last resource. Look
 black and big!

"You style us idiots, therefore — why stop
 short?

"Accomplices in rascality: this we hear
 20 "In our own house, from our invited
 guest

"Found brave enough to outrage a poor
 boy

"Exposed by our good faith! Have you
 been heard?

"Now, then, hear us; one man's not quite
 worth twelve.

"You see a cheat? Here's some twelve
 see an ass:

"Excuse me if I calculate: good day!"
 Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs
 explode.

Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or — he don't.

There's something in real truth (explain
 who can!)

One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
 30 Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and
 won't munch

Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that
 truth,

It spoils me if I proffered in its place!
 I've felt at times when, cockered, cosseted
 And coddled by the aforesaid company,
 Bidden enjoy their bullying, — never fear,

But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying
 man, —

I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
 That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grand-
 mother,

Who keep him from the kennel, sun and
 wind,

Good fun and wholesome mud, — en- 40
 joined be sweet,

And comely and superior, — eyes askance
 The ragged sons o' the gutter at their
 game,

Fain would be down with them i' the thick
 o' the filth,

Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking
 plain,

And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
 I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
 Huggings and humbug — gnashed my
 teeth to mark

A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
 Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what's fixed,
 Where may one stop? Nowhere! The 50
 cheating's nursed

Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
 To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon
 enough:

But you're for progress. "All old, noth-
 ing new?"

"Only the usual talking through the
 mouth,

"Or writing by the hand? I own, I
 thought

"This would develop, grow demonstrable,
 "Make doubt absurd, give figures we might
 see,

"Flowers we might touch. 'There's no one
 doubts you, Sludge!"

"You dream the dreams, you see the
 spiritual sights,

"The speeches come in your head, beyond 60
 dispute.

"Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all
 mouths,

"We want some outward manifestation! —
 well,

"The Pennsylvanians gained such; why
 not Sludge?"

"He may improve with time!"

Ay, that he may!

He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
 'Tis a trifle at first. "Eh, David? Did
 you hear?"

"You jogged the table, your foot caused the
 squeak,

"This time you're . . . joking, are you
 not, my boy?"

"N-n-no!" — and I'm done for, bought
 and sold henceforth.

The old good easy jog-trot way, the . . . 70
 eh?

The . . . not so very false, as falsehood goes,
 The spinning out and drawing fine, you know, —
 Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
 Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
 Surely not downright cheater, — any how,
 'Tis done with and my lot cast; Cheat's my name:
 The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
 Has settled what you'll have the souchong's smack:
 The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those tricks
 That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,
 Clearly no common conjurer's! — no indeed!
 A conjurer? Choose me any craft i' the world
 A inan puts hand to; and with six months' pains
 I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
 To people untaught the trade: have you seen glass blown.
 Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
 Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
 To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
 Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
 To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
 Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
 Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
 At end o' your slipper, — then put out the lights
 And . . . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope!
 I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
 You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
 "Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir?
 "You, hardest head in the United States, —
 "Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let's see!
 "Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
 "I'll try and cheat you, Judge! The table tilts:
 "Is it I that move it? Write! I'll press your hand:
 "Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!"
 Sludge still triumphant! "That a rap, indeed?

"That, the real writing? Very like a whale!
 "Then, if, sir, you — a most distinguished man,
 "And, were the Judge not here, I'd say, . . . no matter!
 "Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us 40 in, —
 "There's little fear that Sludge will!"

Won't he, ma'am?
 But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
 Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
 While you believed that what produced the raps
 Was just a certain child who died, you know,
 And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?
 Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
 At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
 The little voice set lisping once again,
 The tiny hand made feel for yours once 50 more,
 The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
 Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
 The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
 Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang!
 A right mood for investigation, this!
 One's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
 Pompey and Cæsar: but one's own lost child
 I wonder, when you heard the first clod drop
 From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
 To investigate who twitched your funeral 60 scarf
 Or brushed your flounces? Then, it came of course
 You should be stunned and stupid; then, (how else?)
 Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck work.
 But now, such causes fail of such effects,
 All's changed, — the little voice begins afresh,
 Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try
 And touch the truth. "Tests? Didn't the creature tell
 "Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
 "And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
 "Sludge never could learn that!" 70

He could not, eh?
 You compliment him. "Could not?"
 Speak for yourself!

I'd like to know the man I ever saw
 Once, — never mind where, how, why,
 when, — once saw,
 Of whom I do not keep some matter in
 mind
 He'd swear I "could not" know, sagacious
 soul!
 What? Do you live in this world's blow
 of blacks,
 Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
 Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
 Of a smut's worth, no more, no less? —
 one fact
 Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
 10 What someone was, somewhere, some-
 when, somehow?
 You don't tell folk — "See what has stuck
 to me!
 "Judge Humgruffin, our most dis-
 tinguished man,
 "Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
 "Thought to have married Miggs, missed
 him, hit you!" —
 Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-
 week?
 "No," you reply, "what use retailing it?
 "Why should I?" But, you see, one day
 you *should*,
 Because one day there's much use, —
 when this fact
 Brings you the Judge upon both gouty
 knees
 20 Before the supernatural; proves that
 Sludge
 Knows, as you say, a thing he "could not"
 know:
 Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an out-
 stretched face
 The way the wind drives?
 "Could not!" Look you now,
 I'll tell you a story! There's a whiskered
 chap,
 A foreigner, that teaches music here
 And gets his bread, — knowing no better
 way:
 He says, the fellow who informed of him
 And made him fly his country and fall West
 Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched
 soles and sang,
 30 In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
 In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;
 Never asked questions, stopped to listen or
 look,
 Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the
 world
 Roll round his three-legged stool, and news
 run in
 The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked
 up.
 Well, that man went on Sundays, touched
 his pay,
 And took his praise from government, you
 see;

For something like two dollars every week,
 He'd engage tell you some one little thing
 Of some one man, which led to many more, 40
 (Because one truth leads right to the
 world's end)
 And make you that man's master —
 when he dined
 And on what dish, where walked to keep
 his health
 And to what street. His trade was,
 throwing thus
 His sense out, like an ant-eater's long
 tongue,
 Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
 And when 'twas crusted o'er with creature's
 — slick,
 Their juice enriched his palate. "Could
 not Sludge!"
 I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
 Once the imposture plunged its proper 50
 depth
 I' the rotten of your natures, all of you, —
 (If one's not mad nor drunk, and hardly
 then)
 It's impossible to cheat — that's, be found
 out!
 Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of
 mine,
 All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
 Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain
 confess,
 And so has come to grief! You'll find, I
 think,
 Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your
 face.
 There now, you've told them! What's
 their prompt reply?
 "Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated 60
 me,
 "I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at
 times;
 "That's in the 'medium'-nature, thus
 they're made,
 "Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to
 scratch.
 "And so all cats are; still, a cat's the
 beast
 "You coax the strange electric sparks
 from out,
 "By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
 "Nor lion, nor lamb: 'tis the cat's nature,
 sir!
 "Why not the dog's? Ask God, who
 made them beasts!
 "D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced
 man
 "(Like me" — aside) — "like you your- 7
 self," — (aloud)
 "He's stuff to make a 'medium'? Bless
 your soul,
 "'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
 "Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the
 fire!

"We take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
 "Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you —
 "How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
 "He was tried, was tempted by your easiness, —
 "He did not take in me!"

Thank you for Sludge!

I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
 When what you hear's my best word?
 'Tis a challenge

"Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,

"So you cower duly at your keeper's beck!

10 "Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them

"Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
 "Me, if you dare!" And, my wise sir, I dared —

Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,

And had the help o' your vaunted manliness

To bully the incredulous. You used me?
 Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
 Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,

And straight they'd own the error! Who was the fool

When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed

20 Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke

Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek

In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms

To crotchet and quaver? I've made a spirit squeak

In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles —
 Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,

Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.

"All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,

30 "Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!" Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?

For being treated as a showman's ape,
 Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
 Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
 So long as the ape be in it and no man —
 Because a nut pays every mood alike.

Curse your superior, superintending sort,
 Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb

To cure your chimney, bid a "medium" lie

To sweep you truth down! Curse your 40 women too,

Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire

Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
 Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge

As only a "medium," only the kind of thing

They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive

Were too preposterous! But I've paid them out!

They've had their wish — called for the naked truth,

And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:

They had to blush a little and forgive!

"The fact is, children talk so; in next 50 world

"All our conventions are reversed, — perhaps

"Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!

"The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,

"A metropolis in the background, — o'er a bridge,

"A team of trotting roadsters, — cheerful groups

"Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,

"And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not?

"Three nymphs conversing with a cavalier,
 "And never a rag among them: 'fine,' folk cry —

"And heavenly manners seem not much 60 unlike!

"Let Sludge go on; we'll fancy it's in print!"

If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,

Where is the wrong I did them? 'Twas their choice;

They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up

And lost, as some one's sure to do in games;

They fancied I was made to lose, — smoked glass

Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes:

And had I proved a red-hot iron plate

They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,

Whose were the fault but theirs? While, 70 as things go,

Their loss amounts to gain, the more's the shame!

They've had their peep into the spirit-world,

And all this world may know it! They've fed fat

Their self-conceit which else had starved:
what chance

Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the flock,
Friends of a feather? Well, they paid for
it,

And not prodigiously; the price o' the
play,

Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When
you buy

The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside? Whereas my soul
you buy!

10 Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Mac-
beth,

Or you'll not hear his first word! Just go
through

That slight formality, swear himself's the
Thane,

And thenceforth he may strut and fret his
hour,

Spout, sprawl, or spin his target, no one
cares!

Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge
as Sludge?

Enough of it all! I've wiped out scores
with you —

Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
Like tom-fool with your ochre and
carmine,

Worn patchwork your respectable fingers
sewed

20 To metamorphose somebody, — yes, I've
earned

My wages, swallowed down my bread of
shame,

And shake the crumbs off — where but in
your face?

As for religion — why, I served it, sir!
I'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least,
Swedenborg!

In fact, it's just the proper way to baulk
These troublesome fellows — liars, one
and all,

Are not these sceptics? Well, to baffle
them,

30 No use in being squeamish: lie yourself!
Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line,
Your side, as they build up the wall on
theirs;

Where both meet, midway in a point, is
truth

High overhead: so, take your room, pile
bricks,

Lie! Oh, there's titillation in all shame!
What snow may lose in white, snow gains
in rose!

Miss Stokes turns — Rahab, — nor a bad
exchange!

Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,

Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,
Frowbeating now the unabashed before, 40
Ridding us of their whole life's gathered
straws

By a live coal from the altar! Why, of old,
Great men spent years and years in writing
books

To prove we've souls, and hardly proved
it then:

Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and
me!

Surely, to this good issue, all was fair —
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even sup-
pose

He let escape some spice of knavery, —
well,

In wisely being blind to it! Don't you
praise

Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye 50
And saying . . . what was it — that he
could not see

The signal he was bothered with? Ay,
indeed!

I'll go beyond: there's a real love of a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-
plum.

At best, 'tis never pure and full belief;
Those furthest in the quagmire, — don't
suppose

They strayed there with no warning, got no
chance

Of a filth-speck in their face, which they
clenched teeth,

Bent brow against! Be sure they had their 60
doubts,

And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand! But
no!

Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too
apprised,

All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs
waved,

And Sludge called "pet": 'twas easier
marching on

To the promised land; join those who,
Thursday next,

Meant to meet Shakespeare; better follow
Sludge —

Prudent, oh sure! — on the alert, how
else? —

But making for the mid-bog, all the same!
To hear your outcries, one would think I 70
caught

Miss Stokes by the scruff o' the neck, and
pitched her flat,

Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simple-
tons,

That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
Before I've touched them with my finger-
tip!

Thus they await me (do but listen, now!
It's reasoning, this is, — I can't imitate

The baby voice, though) "In so many tales
 'Must be some truth, truth though a pin-
 point big,
 "Yet, some: a single man's deceived,
 perhaps —
 "Hardly, a thousand: to suppose one
 cheat
 "Can gull all these, were more miraculous
 far
 "Than aught we should confess a mir-
 acle"
 And so on. Then the Judge sums up —
 (it's rare)
 Bids you respect the authorities that leap
 To the judgment-seat at once, — why
 don't you note
 10 The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
 The spotless honour, indisputable sense
 Of the first upstart with his story? What —
 Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
 Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble
 him?
 Fools, these are: ay, and how of their
 opposites
 Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
 Believe for a moment? — Men emas-
 culate,
 Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs
 use,
 With superstition safely, — cold of blood,
 20 Who saw what made for them i' the mys-
 tery,
 Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
 — As proselytes? No, thank you, far too
 shrewd!
 — But promisers of fair play, encouragers
 O' the claimant; who in candour needs
 must hoist
 Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of
 Sludge
 To carry off, criticise, and cant about!
 Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so? — at
 any rate,
 It's "a new thing" philosophy fumbles at.
 Then there's the other picker-out of pearl
 30 From dung-heaps, — ay, your literary man,
 Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with
 Sludge
 Daintily and discreetly, — shakes a dust
 O' the doctrine, flavours thence, he well
 knows how,
 The narrative or the novel, — half-be-
 lieves,
 All for the book's sake, and the public's
 stare,
 And the cash that's God's sole solid in this
 world!
 Look at him! Try to be too bold, too
 gross
 For the master! Not you! He's the man
 for muck;
 Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth
 your brown
 40 Into artistic richness, never fear!

Find him the crude stuff; when you
 recognise

Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
 Dressed out for company! "For com-
 pany,"

I say, since there's the relish of success:
 Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
 Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
 Who ushered in the stranger: you must
 sigh

"How melancholy, he, the only one
 "Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
 "Himself gave birth to!" — There's the 5
 triumph's smack!

That man would choose to see the whole
 world roll

I' the slime o' the slough, so he might
 touch the tip

Of his brush with what I call the best of
 browns —

Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the
 power

Of the outworn umber and bistre!

Yet I think

There's a more hateful form of foolery —
 The social sage's, Solomon of saloons

And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
 Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block

To try the edge of his faculty upon, 6c
 Prove how much common sense he'll hack

and hew
 I' the critical minute 'twixt the soup and

fish!
 These were my patrons: these, and the
 like of them

Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it, —
 These I have injured! Gratitude to these?

The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
 To the greenhorn and the bully — friends

of hers,
 From the wag that wants the queer jokes

for his club,
 To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man,

Who just was at his wits' end where to 70
 find

So genial a Pasiphae! All and each
 Pay, compliment, protect from the police:

And how she hates them for their pains,
 like me!

So much for my remorse at thanklessness
 Toward a deserving public!

But, for God?

Ay, that's a question! Well, sir, since you
 press —

(How you do tease the whole thing out of
 me!

I don't mean you, you know, when I say
 "them":

Hate you, indeed! But that Miss Stokes,
 that Judge!

Enough, enough — with sugar: thank 8c
 you, sir!)

Now for it, then! Will you believe me,
though?
You've heard what I confess; I don't
unsay
A single word: I cheated when I could,
Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands
at work,
Wrote down names weak in sympathetic
ink,
Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-
match,
And all the rest; believe that: believe this,
By the same token, though it seem to set
The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
10 Stick up what I've knocked down; I can't
help that
It's truth! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
This trade of mine — I don't know, can't
be sure
But there was something in it, tricks and
all!
Really, I want to light up my own mind.
They were tricks, — true, but what I mean
to add
Is also true. First, — don't it strike you,
sir?
Go back to the beginning, — the first fact
We're taught is, there's a world beside this
world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
20 That much within that world once so-
journd here,
That all upon this world will visit there,
And therefore that we, bodily here below,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o' the
world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old home
With us, their sons, successors, and what
not.
Oh yes, with added powers probably,
30 Fit for the novel state, — old loves grown
pure,
Old interests understood aright, — they
watch!
Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
Proportionate to advancement: they're
ahead,
That's all — do what we do, but noblier
done —
Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off
delf,
(To use a figure).

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of intercourse
Between us men here, and those once-men
there?

First comes the Bible's speech; then,
history

40 With the supernatural element, — you
know —

All that we sucked in with our mothers'
milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of
flesh.

See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events:
What's the first step we take, and can't but
take,

In arguing from the known to the obscure?
Why this: "What was before, may be
to-day.

"Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul,
of course

"My brother's spirit may appear to me?" 50
Go tell your teacher that! What's his
reply?

What brings a shade of doubt for the first
time

O'er his brow late so luminous with faith?"

"Such things have been," says he, "and
there's no doubt

"Such things may be: but I advise mis-
trust

"Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than
all, your brain,

"Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
"Whenever they propose a ghost to you!"

The end is, there's a composition struck;
'Tis settled, we've some way of intercourse 60

Just as in Saul's time; only, different:
How, when and where, precisely, — find it
out!

I want to know, then, what's so natural
As that a person born into this world

And seized on by such teaching, should
begin

With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
For his own allotment, his especial share
I' the secret, — his particular ghost, in
fine?

I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ: take the painter-sort. 70

One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red, — "No

kind of eye
"For colour," say you; while another
picks

And puts away even pebbles, when a
child,

Because of bluish spots and pinky veins —
"Give him forthwith a paint-box!" Just

the same
Was I born . . . "medium," you won't
let me say, —

Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and everywhere, —
Will that do? 80

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-truth;
Only, — what in the rest you style their
sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,

This, betimes, taught them the old world
 had one law
 And ours another: "New world, new
 laws," cried they:
 "None but old laws, seen everywhere at
 work,"
 Cried I, and by their help explained my life
 The Jews' way, still a working way to me.
 Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the
 lights,
 Or Santa Claus slid down on New Year's
 Eve
 And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my
 bed,
 Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the
 fingered slate
 O' the sum that came to grief the day
 before.
 This could not last long: soon enough I
 found
 Who had worked wonders thus, and to
 what end:
 But did I find all easy, like my mates?
 Henceforth no supernatural any more?
 Not a whit: what projects the billiard-
 balls?
 "A cue," you answer: "Yes, a cue,"
 said I;
 "But what hand, off the cushion, moved
 the cue?"
 "What unseen agency, outside the world,
 Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
 Put cakes and shoes and slates into their
 mind,
 "These mothers and aunts, nay even
 schoolmasters?"
 Thus high I sprang, and there have settled
 since.
 Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
 About the greater godsend, what you call
 The serious gains and losses of my life.
 What do I know or care about your world
 Which either is or seems to be? This snap
 O' my fingers, sir! My care is for myself;
 Myself am whole and sole reality
 Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
 Gathered about it: that's the use of things.
 'Tis easy saying they serve vast purposes,
 Advantage their grand selves: be it true or
 false,
 Each thing may have two uses. What's a
 star?
 A world, or a world's sun: doesn't it serve
 As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
 And almanac? Are stars not set for signs
 When we should shear our sheep, sow corn,
 prune trees?
 The Bible says so.
 Well, I add one use
 To all the acknowledged uses, and declare
 If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
 It warns me, "Go, nor lose another day,"
 "And have your hair cut, Sludge!" You
 laugh: and why?
 Were such a sign too hard for God to give?
 No: but Sludge seems too little for such
 grace:
 Thank you, sir! So you think, so does not
 Sludge!
 When you and good men gape at Provi-
 dence,
 Go into history and bid us mark
 Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns
 Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough, 50
 But private mercies — oh, you've told me,
 sir,
 Of such interpositions! How yourself
 Once, missing on a memorable day
 Your handkerchief — just setting out, you
 know, —
 You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
 And saved your precious self from what
 befell
 The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
 You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
 Well, sir, I think them, since you needs
 must know,
 What matter had you and Boston city to 60
 boot
 Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings?
 Much
 To you, no doubt: for me — undoubtedly
 The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
 Because, however sad the truth may seem,
 Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
 You set apart that day in every year
 For special thanksgiving, were a heathen
 else:
 Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
 Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
 "For my part, owing it no gratitude"? 70
 "Nay, but you owe as much" — you'd
 tutor me,
 "You, every man alive, for blessings gained
 "In every hour o' the day, could you but
 know!
 "I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
 "Could they but see!" Well, sir, why
 don't they see?
 "Because they won't look, — or perhaps,
 they can't."
 Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
 Look, microscopically as is right,
 Into each hour with its infinitude
 Of influences at work to profit Sludge? 80
 For that's the case: I've sharpened up my
 sight
 To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
 The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
 Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such
 facts
 Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
 And those same thanks which you exact
 from me
 Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for
 what,

- If nothing guards and guides us little men?
 No, no, sir! You must put away your
 pride,
 Resolve to let Sludge into partnership!
 I live by signs and omens: looked at the
 roof
 Where the pigeons settle — "If the further
 bird,
 "The white, takes wing first, I'll confess
 when thrashed;
 "Not, if the blue does" — so I said to
 myself
 Last week, lest you should take me by
 surprise:
 Off flapped the white, — and I'm con-
 fessing, sir!
- 10 Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
 With only me, i' the world: how can you
 tell?
 "Because unlikely!" Was it likelier, now,
 That this our one out of all worlds beside,
 The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should
 be just
 Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
 And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale's
 true, you know:
 Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
 Why not graced likewise undeserving
 Sludge?
 Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy
 rags?
- 20 All you can bring against my privilege
 Is, that another way was taken with
 you, —
 Which I don't question. It's pure grace,
 my luck:
 I'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
 And need no formal summoning. You've
 a help;
 Holloa his name or whistle, clap your
 hands,
 Stamp with your foot or pull the bell:
 all's one,
 He understands you want him, here he
 comes.
 Just so, I come at the knocking: you, sir,
 wait
 The tongue o' the bell, nor stir before you
 catch
- 30 Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper
 brisk,
 Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
 Your mother's face turned heavenward:
 short of these
 There's no authentic intimation, eh?
 Well, when you hear, you'll answer them,
 start up
 And stride into the presence, top of toe,
 And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge
 that sprang
 At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-
 wall!
 ; think myself the more religious man.
 Religion's all or nothing; it's no mere smile
- O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir — 40
 No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
 Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather,
 stuff
 O' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self.
 I tell you, men won't notice; when they do,
 They'll understand. I notice nothing else:
 I'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and
 gape,
 Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint,
 Handle and help. It's all absurd, and yet
 There's something in it all, I know: how
 much?
 No answer! What does that prove? 50
 Man's still man,
 Still meant for a poor blundering piece of
 work
 When all's done; but, if somewhat's done,
 like this,
 Or not done, is the case the same? Sup-
 pose
 I blunder in my guess at the true sense
 O' the knuckle-summons, nine times out of
 ten, —
 What if the tenth guess happen to be
 right?
 If the tenth shovel-load of powdered
 quartz
 Yield me the nugget? I gather, crush,
 sift all,
 Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
 To give you a notion, now — (let who wins, 60
 laugh!)
 When first I see a man, what do I first?
 Why, count the letters which make up his
 name,
 And as their number chances, even or
 odd,
 Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course:
 Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured
 name,
 And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you?
 "Shall I cheat this stranger?" I take
 apple-pips,
 Stick one in either canthus of my eye,
 And if the left drops first — (your left, sir,
 stuck)
 I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time. 70
 You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
 You judge of character by other rules:
 Don't your rules sometimes fail you?
 Pray, what rule
 Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?
- Oh, be sure,
 You, everybody blunders, just as I,
 In simpler things than these by far! For
 see:
 I knew two farmers, — one, a wiseacre
 Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
 Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
 And then declared, for outcome of his pains, 80
 Next summer must be dampish: 'twas a
 drought.

His neighbour prophesied such drought
would fall,
Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent.
thereby,
And proved a sage indeed: how came his
lore?

Because one brindled heifer, late in March,
Stiffened her tail of evenings, and some-
how

He got into his head that drought was
meant!

I don't expect all men can do as much:
Such kissing goes by favour. You must
take

A certain turn of mind for this, — a twist
10 I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the ant-
eater,

Letting all nature's loosely-guarded notes
Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think
yourself

The one i' the world, the one for whom the
world

Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth!
Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell,
thrive,

Breed, multiply, and bring you food
enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir!

20 Oh, what you mean is this! Such intimate
way,

Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great
With the infinitely small, betokened here
By a course of signs and omens, raps and
sparks, —

How does it suit the dread traditional text
O' the "Great and Terrible Name"?

Shall the Heaven of Heavens
Stoop to such child's play?

Please, sir, go with me
A moment, and I'll try to answer you.

The "*Magnum, et terribile*" (is that right?)

30 Well, folk began with this in the early day;
And all the acts they recognised in proof
Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes,
whirlwinds, dealt

Indisputably on men whose death they
caused.

There, and there only, folk saw Providence
At work, — and seeing it, 'twas right
enough

All heads should tremble, hands wring
hands amain,

And knees knock hard together at the
breath

O' the Name's first letter; why, the Jews,
I'm told,

Won't write it down, no, to this very hour

40 Nor speak aloud: you know best if't be so.

Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept

(Because somehow people once born must
live)

Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway o'
the Name,

Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
And safe space where as yet no fear had
reached;

'Twas there they looked about them,
breathed again,

And felt indeed at home, as we might say.
The current o' common things, the daily
life,

This had their due contempt; no Name
pursued

Man from the mountain-top where fires 50
abide,

To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in
short:

Such was man's vulgar business, far too
small

To be worth thunder: "small," folk kept
on, "small,"

With much complacency in those great
days!

A mote of sand, you know, a blade of
grass —

What was so despicable as mere grass,
Except perhaps the life o' the worm or fly
Which fed there? These were "small"
and men were great.

Well, sir, the old way's altered somewhat 60
since,

And the world wears another aspect now:
Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly grow
big:

We find great things are made of little
things,

And little things go lessening till at last
Comes God behind them. Talk of moun-
tains now?

We talk of mould that heaps the mountain,
mites

That throng the mould, and God that
makes the mites.

The Name comes close behind a stomach-
cyst,

The simplest of creations, just a sac 70
That's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once,
yet lives

And feels, and could do neither, we con-
clude,

If simplified still further one degree:
The small becomes the dreadful and im-
mense!

Lightning, forsooth? No word more upon
that!

A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and
there's

Your dollar's-worth of lightning! But the
cyst

The life of the least of the little things?

No, no!
 Preachers and teachers try another tack,
 Come near the truth this time: they put
 aside
 Thunder and lightning: "That's mis-
 take," they cry,
 "Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor
 sport,
 "But do appreciable good, like tides,
 "Changes o' the wind, and other natural
 facts —
 "Good" meaning good to man, his body
 or soul.
 "Mediate, immediate, all things minister
 10 "To man, — that's settled: be our future
 text
 "We are His children!" So, they now
 harangue
 About the intention, the contrivance, all
 That keeps up an incessant play of love, —
 See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it!
 Well, sir, I put this question: I'm a child?
 I lose no time, but take you at your word:
 How shall I act a child's part properly?
 Your sainted mother, sir, — used you to
 live
 With such a thought as this a-worrying
 you?
 20 "She has it in her power to throttle me,
 "Or stab or poison: she may turn me out,
 "Or lock me in, — nor stop at this to-day,
 "But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
 "I look for" — (long may you enjoy it,
 sir!)
 "In brief, she may unchild the child I am."
 You never had such crotchets? Nor have
 I!
 Who, frank confessing childship from the
 first,
 Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
 So, don't fear, — know what might be,
 well enough,
 30 But know too, child-like, that it will not be,
 At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
 O' the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my
 style.
 But do you fancy I stop short at this?
 Wonder if suit and service, son and heir
 Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find?
 If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
 I straight perceive them irresistible?
 Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
 And, never mind the nods and raps and
 winks,
 40 'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
 Steps forward, does its duty: why, of
 course!
 I have presentiments; my dreams come
 true:
 I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white
 Blithe as a bobolink, and he's dead I learn.
 I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,

And sell him; he goes mad next week and
 snaps.
 I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
 I have not seen these three years; there's
 his knock
 I wager "sixty peaches on that tree!" —
 That I pick up a dollar in my walk, 50
 That your wife's brother's cousin's name
 was George —
 And win on all points. Oh, you wince at
 this?
 You'd fain distinguish between gift and
 gift,
 Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
 O' the elbow when at whist he ought to
 trump?
 With Sludge it's too absurd? *Fine, draw
 the line*
*Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not
 mine!*

Bless us, I'm turning poet! It's time to
 end.
 How you have drawn me out, sir! All I
 ask
 Is — am I heir or not heir? If I'm he, 60
 Then, sir, remember, that same personage
 (To judge by what we read i' the news-
 paper)
 Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
 To carry up and down his coronet,
 Another servant, probably a duke,
 To hold egg-nogg in readiness: why want
 Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's
 house
 Aboard, I'd like to know?

Enough of talk!
 My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
 Why, which of those who say they disbe- 70
 lieve,
 Your clever, people, but has dreamed his
 dream,
 Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his
 fact
 He can't explain, (he'll tell you smilingly)
 Which he's too much of a philosopher
 To count as supernatural, indeed,
 So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it:
 Bidding you still be on your guard, you
 know,
 Because one fact don't make a system
 stand,
 Nor prove this an occasional escape
 Of spirit beneath the matter: that's the 80
 way!
 Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by
 piece,
 The fact in California, the fine gold
 That underlay the gravel — hoarded these,
 But never made a system stand, nor dug!
 So wise men hold out in each hollowed
 palm
 A handful of experience, sparkling fact

They can't explain; and since their rest
of life

Is all explainable, what proof in this?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each fool
has found

O' the million other such philosophers, —
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth unquestionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the common-
place!

10 The other fools believed in mud, no
doubt —

Failed to know gold they saw: was that so
strange?

Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-
fugues,

"Time" with the foil in carte, jump their
own height,

Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate
a five,

Make the red hazard with the cue, clip
nails

While swimming, in five minutes row a
mile,

Pull themselves three feet up with the left
arm,

Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances?

20 The Sludge with luck, who sees the spir-
itual facts

His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback! Think it over by your-
self;

I have not heart, sir, and the fire's gone
grey.

Defect somewhere compensates for suc-
cess,

Everyone knows that. Oh, we're equals,
sir!

The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win the
race:

Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot?

30 Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,

I guess what's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time

In the islands where his kind are, so must
fall

To capering by himself some shiny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of spice —

Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world: while
you,

Blind as a beetle that way, — for amends,
Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir!

40 Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of
yours,

Laugh while it lightens, play with the great
dog,

Speak your mind though it vex some friend
to hear,

Never brag, never bluster, never blush, —
In short, you've pluck, when I'm a coward
— there!

I know it, I can't help it, — folly or no,
I'm paralysed, my hand's no more a hand,
Nor my head a head, in danger: you can
smile

And change the pipe in your cheek. Your
gift's not mine.

Would you swap for mine? No! but
you'd add my gift

To yours: I dare say! I too sigh at 50
times,

Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor
flinch,

Kept cool when threatened, did not mind
so much

Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,
Eating nice things; when I'd amuse my-
self,

I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain
I'm — now the President, now Jenny Lind,

Now Emerson, now the Benicia Boy —
With all the civilised world a-wondering

And worshipping. I know it's folly and
worse;

I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul, 60
But I can't cure myself: despond, despair,

And then, hey, presto, there's a turn o' the
wheel,

Under comes uppermost, fate makes full
amends;

Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred
things

You all are blind to, — I've my taste of
truth,

Likewise my touch of falsehood, — vice
no doubt,

But you've your vices also: I'm content.

What, sir? You won't shake hands?
"Because I cheat!"

"You've found me out in cheating!"
That's enough

To make an apostle swear! Why, when I 70
cheat,

*Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in
the act,*

Are you, or, rather, am I sure o' the fact?
(There's verse again, but I'm inspired
somehow.)

Well then I'm not sure! I may be, perhaps,
Free as a babe from cheating: how it
began,

My gift, — no matter; what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that's the question; an-
swer that!

Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was hold-
ing mine,

Leading me whither, I had died of fright:
So, I was made believe I led myself.

80 If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof

To roof, you would not cross the street,
 one step,
 Even at your mother's summons: but,
 being shrewd,
 If I paste paper on each side the plank
 And swear 'tis solid pavement, why, you'll
 cross
 Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
 Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet
 below:
 I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for
 stone.
 Some impulse made me set a thing, o' the
 move
 Which, started once, ran really by itself;
 10 Beer flows thus, suck the siphon; toss the
 kite,
 It takes the wind and floats of its own
 force.
 Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the
 lack
 Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it!
 Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
 She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
 Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,
 And seen truth follow, marvels none of
 mine;
 All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive!
 I don't know if I move your hand some-
 times
 20 When the spontaneous writing spreads so
 far,
 If my knee lifts the table all that height,
 Why the instand don't fall off the desk
 a-tilt,
 Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
 Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
 Why I speak so much more than I intend,
 Describe so many things I never saw.
 I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
 Nothing at all, — that everybody can,
 Will, and does cheat: but in another sense
 30 I'm ready to believe my very self —
 That every cheat's inspired, and every lie
 Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
 If I know a way without it? This is why!
 There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
 In any desecration of one's soul
 To a worthy end, — isn't it Herodotus
 (I wish I could read Latin!) who describes
 The single gift o' the land's virginity,
 40 Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
 (I've but a hazy notion — help me, sir!)
 For one purpose in the world, one day in
 a life,
 One hour in a day — thereafter, purity,
 And a veil thrown o'er the past for ever-
 more!
 Well, now, they understood a many things
 Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!
 I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,

And the end's gain, — truth should be
 mine henceforth.

This goes to the root o' the matter, sir,
 — this plain

Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it 50
 The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?
 What need I care? I cheat in self-defence,
 And there's my answer to a world of cheats!
 Cheat? To be sure, sir! What's the
 world worth else?

Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his
 stars?

Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing
 up

And polishing over? Your so-styled
 great men,

Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
 Or try their skill at tinkering? What's 60
 your world?

Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,
 Of the luckiest kind, whether in head and
 heart,

Body and soul, or all that helps them both.
 Well, now, look back: what faculty of
 yours,

Came to its full, had ample justice done
 By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
 Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
 Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons
 due?

Never! You shot up and frost nipped
 you off,

Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you 70
 sprout;

One faculty thwarted its fellow: at the end,
 All you boast is "I had proved a topping
 tree

"In other climes" — yet this was the right
 clime

Had you foreknown the seasons. Young,
 you've force

Wasted like well-streams: old — oh, then
 indeed,

Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
 Through which you'd play off wondrous
 waterwork;

Only, no water's left to feed their play.
 Young, — you've a hope, an aim, a love:
 it's tossed

And crossed and lost: you struggle on, 80
 some spark

Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
 Through cold and pain; these in due time
 subside,

Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded
 light

You mean to loose on the altered face of
 things, —

Up with it on the tripod! It's extinct.
 Spend your life's remnant asking, which
 was best,

- Light smothered up that never peeped
forth once,
Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine?
Well, accept this too, — seek the fruit of it
Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on
earth,
But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
Another life, — you've lost this world —
you've gained
Its knowledge for the next. What know-
ledge, sir,
Except that you know nothing? Nay,
you doubt
Whether 'twere better have made you man
or brute,
10 If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
There's your world!
- Give it me! I slap it brisk
With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre:
what's it now?
Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty
weed,
At first wash-over o' the returning wave!
All the dry dead impracticable stuff
Starts into life and light again; this world
Pervaded by the influx from the next.
I cheat, and what's the happy consequence?
20 You find full justice straightway dealt you
out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at
ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour
now
As the price of worse than nothing! No
mere film
Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs i' the sunshine moralists forbid!
What would you have? Just speak and,
there, you see!
You're supplemented, made a whole at
last,
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you
songs,
30 And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference
piques,
Shows that e'en better than this best will
be —
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste since,
one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace: all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures,
flesh
40 Transfused by souls, and such souls!
Oh, 'tis choice!
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too
thin,
- Seem nigh on bursting, — if you nearly see
The real world through the false, — what
do you see?
Is the old so ruined? You find you're
in a flock
O' the youthful, earnest, passionate —
genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for
these:
And all depose their natural rights,
hail you,
(That's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-
fellow,
Participate in Sludgehood — nay, grow
mine,
I veritably possess them — banish doubt, 50
And reticence and modesty alike!
Why, here's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia! Here's true life indeed,
And the world well won now, mine for the
first time!
- And all this might be, may be, and with
good help
Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge lies!
Why, he's at worst your poet who sings
how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was,
Did this or the other impossible great thing!
He's Lowell — it's a world (you smile 60
applause),
Of his own invention — wondrous Long-
fellow,
Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does more
than they,
And acts the books they write: the more
his praise!
- But why do I mount to poets? Take
plain prose —
Dealers in common sense, set these at
work,
What can they do without their helpful
lies?
Each states the law and fact and face o'
the thing
Just as he'd have them, finds what he
thinks fit,
Is blind to what missuits him, just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the 70
rest.
It's a History of the World, the Lizard Age,
The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in
stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your world.
There's plenty of "How did you contrive
to grasp
"The thread which led you through this
labyrinth?
"How build such solid fabric out of air?
"How on so slight foundation found this tale, 80

"Biography, narrative?" or, in other words,

"How many lies did it require to make
"The portly truth you here present us with?"

"Oh," quoth the penman, purring at your praise,

"Tis fancy all; no particle of fact:

"I was poor and threadbare when I wrote that book

"Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at Thebes?

"We writers paint out of our heads, you see!"

10 "Ah, the more wonderful the gift in you,
"The more creativeness and godlike craft!"

But I, do I present you with my piece,
It's "What, Sludge? When my sainted mother spoke

"The verses Lady Jane Grey last composed
"About the rosy bower in the seventh heaven

"Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep house,—

"You made the raps? 'Twas your invention that?

"Cur, slave and devil!" — eight fingers and two thumbs
Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone,
'Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,

20 Is better for a bruise than arnica.
There, sir! I bear no malice: 'tish't in me.
I know I acted wrongly: still, I've tried
What I could say in my excuse, — to show
The devil's not all devil . . . I don't pretend,

He's angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I've lost you, lost myself,
Lost all-l-l-l- . . .

No — are you in earnest, sir?
O yours, sir, is an angel's part! I know
What prejudice prompts, and what's the common course

30 Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit:

Only you rise superior to it all!
No, sir, it don't hurt much; it's speaking long

That makes me choke a little: the marks will go!

What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,

And not a word to Greeley? One — one kiss

O' the hand that saves me! You'll not let me speak,

I well know, and I've lost the right, too true!

But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)

Your sainted . . . Well, sir, — be it so!

That's, I think,
My bed-room candle. Good-night! 40
Bl-l-less you, sir!

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard!
Cowardly scamp!

I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering! Oh what, you're the man?

You're satisfied at last? You've found out Sludge?

We'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!

I too can tell my story: brute, — do you hear? —

You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,

In just such a fit of passion: no, it was . . .
To get this house of hers, and many a note

Like these . . . I'll pocket them, however 50
. . . five,

Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,

Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!

Where was my head? I ought to have prophesied

He'll die in a year and join her: that's the way.

I don't know where my head is: what had I done?

How did it all go? I said he poisoned her,
And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,

Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me

And called me cheat: I thrashed him, — who could help?

He howled for mercy, prayed me on his 60
knees

Tocut and run and save him from disgrace:
I do so, and once off, he slanders me.

An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!
Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,

V-notes are something, liberty still more.
Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

APPARENT FAILURE.

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building." — *Paris Newspaper*.

I.

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day

To see the baptism of your Prince;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way: 70

Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine side, you surmise,

Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,

So sauntered till — what met my eyes?

II.

Only the Doric little Morgue!
 The dead-house where you show your
 drowned:
 Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the
 Sargue,
 Your Morgue has made the Seine re-
 nowned.
 One pays one's debt in such a case;
 I plucked up heart and entered, —
 stalked,
 Keeping a tolerable face
 Compared with some whose cheeks were
 chalked:
 Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

III.

10 First came the silent gazers; next,
 A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
 Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
 The three men who did most abhor
 Their life in Paris yesterday,
 So killed themselves: and now, en-
 throned
 Each on his copper couch, they lay
 Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
 I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

IV.

20 Poor men, God made, and all for that!
 The reverence struck me; o'er each head
 Religiously was hung its hat,
 Each coat dripped by the owner's bed
 Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
 His bounds, his proper place of rest,
 Who last night tenanted on earth
 Some arch, where twelve such slept
 abreast, —
 Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

V.

30 How did it happen, my poor boy?
 You wanted to be Buonaparte
 And have the Tuileries for toy,
 And could not, so it broke your heart?
 You, old one by his side, I judge,
 Were, red as blood, a socialist,
 A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
 You've gained what no Republic
 missed?
 Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

VI.

40 And this — why, he was red in vain,
 Or black, — poor fellow that is blue!
 What fancy was it turned your brain?
 Oh, women were the prize for you!
 Money gets women, cards and dice
 Get money, and ill-luck gets just
 The copper couch and one clear nice
 Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
 The right thing to extinguish lust!

VII.

It's wiser being good than bad;
 It's safer being meek than fierce:
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched; 50
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best, can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

EPILOGUE.

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David.*

I.

ON the first of the Feast of Feasts,
 The Dedication Day,
 When the Levites joined the Priests
 At the Altar in robed array,
 Gave signal to sound and say, —

II.

When the thousands, rear and van, 60
 Swarming with one accord
 Became as a single man
 (Look, gesture, thought and word)
 In praising and thanking the Lord, —

III.

When the singers lift up their voice,
 And the trumpets made endeavour,
 Sounding, "In God rejoice!"
 Saying, "In Him rejoice
 "Whose mercy endureth for ever!" —

IV.

Then the Temple filled with a cloud, 70
 Even the House of the Lord;
 Porch bent and pillar bowed:
 For the presence of the Lord,
 In the glory of His cloud,
 Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renan.*

Gone now! All gone across the dark so
 far,
 Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shut-
 ting still,
 Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
 Which came, stood, opened once! We
 gazed our fill
 With upturned faces on as real a Face 80
 That, stooping from grave music and
 mild fire,
 Took in our homage, made a visible place
 Through many a depth of glory; gyre on
 gyre,
 For the dim human tribute. Was this true?
 Could man indeed avail, mere praise of his,
 To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
 Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure
 pale bliss?

Why did it end? Who failed to beat the
 breast,
 And shriek, and throw the arms protest-
 ing wide,
 When a first shadow showed the star ad-
 dressed
 Itself to motion, and on either side
 The rims contracted as the rays retired;
 The music, like a fountain's sickening
 pulse,
 Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
 Some vestige of a Face no pangs con-
 vulse,
 No prayers retard; then even this was
 gone,
 10 Lost in the night at last. We, lone and
 left
 Silent through centuries, ever and anon
 Venture to probe again the vault best
 Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
 Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men
 say —
 And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
 But where may hide what came and
 loved our clay?
 How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
 The star which chose to stoop and stay
 for us?
 Unroll the records! Hailed ye such ad-
 vance
 20 Indeed, and did your hope vanish thus?
 Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
 We shall not look up, know ourselves are
 seen,
 Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
 Acting or suffering, have the disk's
 serene
 Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
 Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and
 numb,
 Its core had never crimsoned all the same,
 Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb?
 Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
 30 Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch
 appals,
 Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those
 the most
 On whose repugnant brow the crown
 next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER.

I.

Witless alike of will and way divine,
 How heaven's high with earth's low should
 intertwine!
 Friends, I have seen through your eyes:
 now use mine!

II.

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
 Look at his head and heart, find how and
 why
 He differs from his fellows utterly:

III.

Then, like me, watch when nature by
 degrees
 Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas 40
 (They said of old) the instinctive water flees

IV.

Toward some elected point of central rock,
 As though, for its sake only, roamed the
 flock
 Of waves about the waste: awhile they
 mock

V.

With radiance caught for the occasion, —
 hues
 Of blackest hell now, now such reds and
 blues
 As only heaven could fitly interfuse, —

VI.

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
 O' the current for a minute: then they
 wring
 Up by the roots and oversweep the thing, 50

VII.

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
 The same part, choose another peak as
 bare,
 They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

VIII.

When you see what I tell you, — nature
 dance
 About each man of us, retire, advance,
 As though the pageant's end were to
 enhance

IX.

His worth, and — once the life, his product,
 gained —
 Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sus-
 tained,
 And show thus real, a thing the North but
 feigned —

X.

When you acknowledge that one world 60
 could do
 All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
 Divide us, each from other, me from you, —

XI.

Why, where's the need of Temple, when
 the walls
 O' the world are that? What use of swells
 and falls
 From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and
 trumpet-calls?

XII.

That one Face, far from vanish, rather
 grows,
 Or decomposes but to recompose,
 Become my universe that feels and knows.

BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE;

INCLUDING

A TRANSCRIPT FROM EURIPIDES.

1871.

[After the ill starred expedition under Nikias against Sicily, and the crowning disaster of Syracuse had become known to the inhabitants of Rhodes, a great reaction against the supremacy of Athens set in, and a general determination to side with Sparta was expressed. Against this the girl Balaustion (Wild pomegranate flower) vehemently protested, and calling together those whom she could muster, they took ship for Athens. Encountering storms and pursued by pirates, they were driven upon Syracuse Harbour, where, however, they were at first refused admission and thrust back upon the pirates. At the last moment, however, curiosity was expressed as to Euripides, and Balaustion came forward and offered to recite the *Alkestis*, which she did before the whole listening city.]

TO THE COUNTESS COWPER.

If I mention the simple truth: that this poem absolutely owes its existence to you, — who not only suggested, but imposed on me as a task, what has proved the most delightful of May-month amusements — I shall seem honest, indeed, but hardly prudent; for, how good and beautiful ought such a poem to be!

Euripides might fear little; but I, also, have an interest in the performance; and what wonder if I beg you to suffer that it make, in another and far easier sense, its nearest possible approach to those Greek qualities of goodness and beauty, by laying itself gratefully at your feet? R. B.

LONDON: *July 23, 1871.*

BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE.

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres.

ABOUT that strangest, saddest, sweetest song

I, when a girl, heard in Kameiros once,
And, after, saved my life by? Oh, so glad
To tell you the adventure!

Petalé,
Phullis, Charopé, Chrusion! You must know,

This "after" fell in that unhappy time
When poor reluctant Nikias, pushed by fate,

Went falteringly against Syracuse;
And there shamed Athens, lost her ships
and men,

And gained a grave, or death without a grave.

I was at Rhodes — the isle, not Rhodes the town,

Mine was Kameiros — when the news arrived:

Our people rose in tumult, cried "No more

Duty to Athens, let us join the League
And side with Sparta, share the spoil, —
at worst,

Abjure a headship that will ruin Greece!"
And so, they sent to Knidos for a fleet

To come and help revolters. Ere help came, —

Girl as I was, and never out of Rhodes

The whole of my first fourteen years of life, ²⁰
But nourished with Ilissian¹ mother's-milk, —

I passionately cried to who would hear
And those who loved me at Kameiros —
"No!

Never throw Athens off for Sparta's sake —

Never disloyal to the life and light
Of the whole world worth calling world
at all!

Rather go die at Athens, lie outstretched
For feet to trample on, before the gate

Of Diomedes or the Hippadai,
Before the temples and among the tombs, ³⁰
Than tolerate the grim felicity

Of harsh Lakonia! Ours the fasts and feasts,

Choës and Chutroi;² ours the sacred grove,
Agora, Dikasteria, Poikilé,
Pnux, Keramikos; Salamis in sight,
Psuttalia, Marathon itself, not far!

¹ Athenian.

² Feasts of the god.

- Ours the great Dionusiæc theatre,
And tragic triad of immortal fames,
Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides!
To Athens, all of us that have a soul,
Follow me!" And I wrought so with my
prayer,
That certain of my kinsfolk crossed the
strait
And found a ship at Kaunos; well-dis-
posed
Because the Captain — where did he draw
breath
First but within Psuttalia? Thither fled
10 A few like-minded as ourselves. We
turned
The glad prow westward, soon were out at
sea,
Pushing, brave ship with the vermilion
cheek,
Proud for our heart's true harbour. But a
wind
Lay ambushed by Point Malea of bad
fame,
And leapt out, bent us from our course.
Next day
Broke stormless, so broke next blue day
and next.
"But whither bound in this white waste?"
we plagued
The pilot's old experience: "Cos or
Crete?"
Because he promised us the land ahead.
20 While we strained eyes to share in what he
saw,
The Captain's shout startled us; round we
rushed:
What hung behind us but a pirate-ship
Panting for the good prize! "Row!
harder row!
Row for dear life!" the Captain cried:
"'tis Crete,
Friendly Crete looming large there! Beat
this craft
That's but a keles, one-benched pirate-
bark,
Lokrain, or that bad breed off Thessaly!
Only, so cruel are such water-thieves,
No man of you, no woman, child, or slave,
30 But falls their prey, once let them board
our boat!"
So, furiously our oarsmen rowed and
rowed;
And when the oars flagged somewhat,
dash and dip,
As we approached the coast and safety, so
That we could hear behind us plain the
threats
And curses of the pirate panting up
In one more throe and passion of pursuit, —
Seeing our oars flag in the rise and fall,
I sprang upon the altar by the mast
And sang aloft, — some genius prompting
me, —
40 That song of ours which saved at Salamis:
- "O sons of Greeks, go, set your country
free,
Free your wives, free your children, free
the fanes
O' the Gods, your fathers founded, —
sepulchres
They sleep in! Or save all, or all be lost!"
Then, in a frenzy, so the noble oars
Churned the black water white, that well
away
We drew, soon saw land rise, saw hills grow
up,
Saw spread itself a sea-wide town with
towers,
Not fifty stadia distant; and, betwixt
A large bay and a small, the islet-bar,
Even Ortugia's self — oh, luckless we!
50 For here was Sicily and Syracuse:
We ran upon the lion from the wolf.
Ere we drew breath, took counsel, out
there came
A galley, hailed us. "Who asks entry here
In war-time? Are you Sparta's friend or
foe?"
"Kaunians" — our Captain judged his
best reply,
"The mainland-seaport that belongs to
Rhodes;
Rhodes that casts in her lot now with the
League,
Forsaking Athens, — you have heard 60
belike!"
"Ay, but we heard all Athens in one ode
just now! we heard her in that Aischulos!
You bring a boatful of Athenians here,
Kaunians although you be: and prudence
bids
For Kaunos' sake, why, carry them unhurt
To Kaunos, if you will: for Athens' sake,
Back must you, though ten pirates blocked
the bay!
We want no colony from Athens here,
With memories of Salamis, forsooth,
70 To spirit up our captives, that pale crowd
I' the quarry, whom the daily pint of corn
Keeps in good order and submissiveness."
Then the grey Captain prayed them by the
Gods,
And by their own knees, and their fathers'
beards,
They should not wickedly thrust suppliants
back,
But save the innocent on traffic bound —
Or, may be, some Athenian family
Perishing of desire to die at home, —
From that vile foe still lying on its oars,
Waiting the issue in the distance. Vain! 80
Words to the wind! And we were just
about
To turn and face the foe, as some tired
bird
Barbarians pelt at, drive with shouts away
From shelter in what rocks, however rude,
She makes for, to escape the kindled eye,

Split beak, crook'd claw o' the creature,
cormorant

Or ossifrage,¹ that, hardly baffled, hangs
Afloat i' the foam, to take her if she turn.
So were we at destruction's very edge,
When those o' the galley, as they had dis-
cussed

A point, a question raised by somebody,
A matter mooted in a moment, — "Wait!"
Cried they (and wait we did, you may be
sure).

"That song was veritable Aischulos,
10 Familiar to the mouth of man and boy,
Old glory: how about Euripides?
The newer and not yet so famous bard,
He that was born upon the battle-day
While that song and the salpinx² sounded
him

Into the world, first sound, at Salamis —
Might you know any of his verses too?"

Now, some one of the Gods inspired this
speech:

Since ourselves knew what happened but
last year —

How, when Gulippos gained his victory
20 Over poor Nikias, poor Demosthenes,
And Syracuse condemned the conquered
force

To dig and starve i' the quarry, branded
them

Freeborn Athenians, brute-like in the front
With horse-head brands, — ah, "Region
of the Steed"!³ —

Of all these men immersed in misery,
It was found none had been advantaged so
By aught in the past life he used to prize
And pride himself concerning, — no rich
man

By riches, no wise man by wisdom, no
30 Wiser man still (as who loved more the
Muse)

By storing, at brain's edge and tip of
tongue,

Old glory, great plays that had long ago
Made themselves wings to fly about the
world, —

Not one such man was helped so at his need
As certain few that (wisest they of all)
Had, at first summons, oped heart, flung
door wide

At the new knocking of Euripides,
Nor drawn the bolt with who cried "De-
cadence!

And, after Sophokles, be nature dumb!"
40 Such, — and I see in it God Bacchos' boon
To souls that recognised his latest child,
He who himself, born latest of the Gods,
Was stoutly held impostor by mankind, —
Such were in safety: any who could speak
A chorus to the end, or prologise,

Roll out a rhesis,⁴ wield some golden length
Stiffened by wisdom out into a line,
Or thrust and parry in bright monostich,⁵
Teaching Euripides to Syracuse —
Any such happy man had prompt reward: 50
If he lay bleeding on the battle-field
They stanch'd his wounds and gave him
drink and food;

If he were slave i' the house, for reverence
They rose up, bowed to who proved master
now,

And bade him go free, thank Euripides!
Ay, and such did so: many such, he said,
Returning home to Athens, sought him out,
The old bard in the solitary house,
And thanked him ere they went to sacrifice.
I say, we knew that story of last year! 60

Therefore, at mention of Euripides,
The Captain crow'd out "Euoi, praise the
God!

Oôp, boys, bring our owl-shield to the fore!
Out with our Sacred Anchor! Here she
stands,

Balaustion! Strangers, greet the lyric
girl!

Euripides? Babai! what a word there
'scaped

Your teeth's enclosure, quoth my grand-
sire's song!

Why, fast as snow in Thrace, the voyage
through,

Has she been falling thick in flakes of him!
Frequent as figs at Kaunos, Kaunians 70
said.

Balaustion, stand forth and confirm my
speech!

Now it was some whole passion of a play;
Now, peradventure, but a honey-drop
That slipt its comb i' the chorus. If there
rose

A star, before I could determine steer
Southward or northward — if a cloud sur-
prised

Heaven, ere I fairly holla'd 'Furl the
sail! —'

She had at fingers' end both cloud and
star;

Some thought that perched there, tame
and tuneable,

Fitted with wings; and still, as off it flew, 80
'So sang Euripides,' she said, 'so sang

The meteoric poet of air and sea,
Planets and the pale populace of heaven,
The mind of man, and all that's made to
soar!'

And so, although she has some other name,
We only call her Wild-pomegranate-flower,
Balaustion; since, where'er the red bloom
burns

¹ The osprey.

² A trumpet.

³ Attica was famous for horses.

⁴ A speech in a play.

⁵ A dialogue in which each speaker speaks a single line in turn.

I' the dull dark verdure of the bounteous tree,

Dethroning, in the Rosy Isle,¹ the rose,
You shall find food, drink, odour, all at once;

Cool leaves to bind about an aching brow,
And, never much away, the nightingale.
Sing them a strophe, with the turn-again,
Down to the verse that ends all, proverb-like,

And save us, thou Balaustion, bless the name!"

But I cried "Brother Greek! better than so, —

10 Save us, and I have courage to recite
The main of a whole play from first to last;
That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his,

ALKESTIS; which was taught, long years ago

At Athens, in Glaukinos' archonship,
But only this year reached our Isle o' the Rose.

I saw it, at Kameiros, played the same,
They say, as for the right Lenean feast
In Athens; and beside the perfect piece —
Its beauty and the way it makes you weep, —

20 There is much honour done your own loved God

Herakles, whom you house i' the city here
Nobly, the Temple wide Greece talks about!

I come a suppliant to your Herakles!
Take me and put me on his temple-steps
To tell you his achievement as I may,
And, that told, he shall bid you set us free!"

Then, because Greeks are Greeks, and hearts are hearts,

And poetry is power, — they all outbroke
In a great joyous laughter with much love:

30 "Thank Herakles for the good holiday!
Make for the harbour! Row, and let voice ring,

"In we row, bringing more Euripides!"
All the crowd, as they lined the harbour now,

"More of Euripides!" — took up the cry.
We landed; the whole city, soon astir,
Came rushing out of gates in common joy
To the suburb temple; there they stationed me

O' the topmost step: and plain I told the play,

Just as I saw it; what the actors said,
40 And what I saw, or thought I saw the while,
At our Kameiros theatre, clean-scooped
Out of a hill-side, with the sky above

And sea before our seats in marble row:
Told it, and, two days more, repeated it,

¹ Rhodes.

Until they sent us on our way again
With good words and great wishes.

Oh, for me —

A wealthy Syracusan brought a whole
Talent and bade me take it for myself:

I left it on the tripod in the fane,
— For had not Herakles a second time
Wrestled with Death and saved devoted
ones? —

Thank-offering to the hero. And a band
Of captives, whom their lords grew kinder to
Because they called the poet countryman,
Sent me a crown of wild-pomegranate-flower:

So, I shall live and die Balaustion now.
But one — one man — one youth, —
three days, each day, —

(If, ere I lifted up my voice to speak,
I gave a downward glance by accident)
Was found at foot o' the temple. When
we sailed,

There, in the ship too, was he found as well,

Having a hunger to see Athens too.
We reached Peiraieus; when I landed —
lo,

He was beside me. Anthesterion-month
Is just commencing: when its moon rounds full,

We are to marry. O Euripides!

I saw the master: when we found ourselves
(Because the young man needs must follow me)

Firm on Peiraieus, I demanded first
Whither to go and find him. Would you
think?

The story how he saved us made some smile:

They wondered strangers were exorbitant
In estimation of Euripides.

He was not Aischulos nor Sophokles:
— "Then, of our younger bards who boast
the bay,

Had I sought Agathon, or Iophon,
Or, what now had it been Kephisophon?
A man that never kept good company,

The most unsociable of poet-kind,
All beard that was not freckle in his face!" 80

I soon was at the tragic house, and saw
The master, held the sacred hand of him
And laid it to my lips. Men love him not:
How should they? Nor do they much love
his friend

Sokrates: but those two have fellowship:
Sokrates often comes to hear him read,
And never misses if he teach a piece.

Both, being old, will soon have company,
Sit with their peers above the talk. Mean-
time,

He lives as should a statue in its niche;
Cold walls enclose him, mostly darkness
there. 90

Alone, unless some foreigner uncouth
Breaks in, sits, stares an hour, and so
departs,
Brain-stuffed with something to sustain his
life,
Dry to the marrow 'mid much merchan-
dise.

How should such know and love the man?
Why, mark!

Even when I told the play and got the
praise,

There spoke up a brisk little somebody,
Critic and whippersnapper, in a rage
To set things right: "The gir. departs from
truth!

10 Pretends she saw what was not to be seen,
Making the mask of the actor move, for-
sooth!

'Then a fear flitted o'er the wife's white
face,' —

'Then frowned the father,' — 'then the
husband shóok,' —

'Then from the festal forehead slipt each
spray,

'And the heroic mouth's gay grace was
gone;' —

As she had seen each naked fleshly face,
And not the merely-painted mask it wore!"

Well, is the explanation difficult?
What's poetry except a power that makes?

10 And, speaking to one sense, inspires the
rest,

Pressing them all into its service; so
That who sees painting, seems to hear as
well

The speech that's proper for the painted
mouth;

And who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once — for how count heart-
beats plain

Unless a company, with hearts which beat,
Come close to the musician, seen or no?

And who receives true verse at eye or ear,
Takes in (with verse) time, place, and
person too,

10 So, links each sense on to its sister-sense,
Grace-like: and what if but one sense of
three

Front you at once? The sidelong pair
conceive

Thro' faintest touch of finest finger-tips, —
Hear, see and feel, in faith's simplicity,

Alike, what one was sole recipient of:
Who hears the poem, therefore, sees the
play.

Enough and too much! Hear the play
itself!

Under the grape-vines, by the streamlet-
side,

Close to Baccheion; till the cool increase,
10 And other stars steal on the evening-star,

And so, we homeward flock i' the dust, we
live!

You will expect, no one of all the words
O' the play but is grown part now of my
soul,

Since the adventure. 'Tis the poet speaks:
But if I, too, should try and speak at times,

Leading your love to where my love, per-
chance,

Climbed earlier, found a nest before you
knew —

Why, bear with the poor climber, for love's
sake!

Look at Baccheion's beauty opposite,
The temple with the pillars at the porch! 50

See you not something beside masonry?
What if my words wind in and out the stone

As yonder ivy, the God's parasite?
Though they leap all the way the pillar

leads,
Festoon about the marble, foot to frieze,

And serpentiningly enrich the roof,
Toy with some few bees and a bird or

two, —
What then? The column holds the cor-
nice up.

There slept a silent palace in the sun,
With plains adjacent and Thessalian 60
peace —

Pheral, where King Admetos ruled the
land.

Out from the portico there gleamed a God,
Apollon: for the bow was in his hand,

The quiver at his shoulder, all his shape
One dreadful beauty. And he hailed the

house
As if he knew it well and loved it much:

"O Admeteian domes, where I endured,
Even the God I am, to drudge awhile,

Do righteous penance for a reckless deed,
Accepting the slaves' table thankfully!" 70

Then told how Zeus had been the cause of
all,

Raising the wrath in him which took
revenge

And slew those forgers of the thunderbolt
Wherewith Zeus blazed the life from out

the breast
Of Phoibos' son Asklepios (I surmise,

Because he brought the dead to life again)
And so, for punishment, must needs go

slave,
God as he was, with a mere mortal lord:

— Told how he came to King Admetos'
land,

And played the ministrant, was herdsman 80
there,

Warding all harm away from him and his
Till now; "For, holy as I am," said he,

"The lord I chanced upon was holy too:
Whence I deceived the Moirai, drew from

death
My master, this same son of Pheres, — ay,

The Goddesses conceded him escape

From Hades, when the fated day should
 fall,
 Could he exchange lives, find some
 friendly one
 Ready, for his sake, to content the grave.
 But trying all in turn, the friendly list,
 Why, he found no one, none who loved so
 much,
 Nor father, nor the aged mother's self
 That bore him, no, not any save his wife,
 Willing to die instead of him and watch
 Never a sunrise nor a sunset more:
 10 And she is even now within the house,
 Uphorne by pitying hands, the feeble frame
 Gasping its last of life out; since to-day
 Destiny is accomplished, and she dies,
 And I, lest here pollution light on me,
 Leave, as ye witness, all my wonted joy
 In this dear dwelling. Ay, — for here
 comes Death
 Close on us of a sudden! who, pale priest
 Of the mute people, means to bear his
 prey
 To the house of Hades. The symmetric
 step!
 20 How he treads true to time and place and
 thing,
 Dogging day, hour and minute, for death's-
 due!"

And we observed another Deity,
 Half in, half out the portal, — watch and
 ward,
 Eyeing his fellow: formidably fixed,
 Yet faltering too at who affronted him,
 As somehow disadvantaged, should they
 strive.
 Like some dread heapy blackness, ruffled
 wing,
 Convulsed and cowering head that is all
 eye,
 Which proves a ruined eagle who, too blind
 30 Swooping in quest o' the quarry, fawn or
 kid,
 Descried deep down the chasm 'twixt rock
 and rock,
 Has wedged and mortised, into either wall
 O' the mountain, the pent earthquake of
 his power;
 So lies, half hurtless yet still terrible,
 Just when — who stalks up, who stands
 front to front,
 But the great lion-guarder of the gorge,
 Lord of the ground, a stationed glory
 there?
 Yet he too praises ere he try the worst
 O' the frightful unfamiliar nature, new
 40 To the chasm, indeed, but elsewhere
 known enough,
 Among the shadows and the silences
 Above 't the sky: so each antagonist
 Silently faced his fellow and forbore.
 Till Death shrilled, hard and quick, in
 spite and fear:

"Ha ha, and what mayst thou do at the
 domes,
 Why hauntest here, thou Phoibos? Here
 again
 At the old injustice, limiting our rights,
 Baulking of honour due us Gods o' the
 grave?
 Was't not enough for thee to have delayed
 Death from Admetos, — with thy crafty art
 Cheating the very Fates, — but thou must
 arm
 The bow-hand and take station, press
 'twixt me
 And Pelias' daughter, who then saved her
 spouse,
 Did just that, now thou comest to undo, —
 'Taking his place to die, Alkestis here?"
 But the God sighed "Have courage! All
 my arms,
 This time, are simple justice and fair
 words."
 Then each plied each with rapid inter-
 change:
 "What need of bow, were justice arms
 enough?"
 "Ever it is my wont to bear the bow." 6
 "Ay, and with bow, not justice, help this
 house!"
 "I help it, since a friend's woe weighs me
 too."
 "And now, — wilt force from me this
 second corpse?"
 "By force I took no corpse at first from
 thee."
 "How then is he above ground, not be-
 neath?"
 "He gave his wife instead of him, thy prey."
 "And prey, this time at least, I bear be-
 low!"
 "Go take her! — for I doubt persuading
 thee . . ."
 "To kill the doomed one? What my
 function else?"
 "No! Rather, to dispatch the true 7
 mature."
 "Truly I take thy meaning, see thy
 drift!"
 "Is there a way then she may reach old
 age?"

"No way! I glad me in my honours too!"

"But, young or old, thou tak'st one life, no more!"

"Younger they die, greater my praise re-
counds!"

"If she die old, — the sumptuous funeral!"

"Thou layest down a law the rich would
like."

"How so? Did wit lurk there and 'scape
thy sense?"

"Who could buy substitutes would die old
men."

"It seems thou wilt not grant me, then, this
grace?"

"This grace I will not grant: thou know'st
my ways."

10 "Ways harsh to men, hateful to Gods, at
least!"

"All things thou canst not have: my rights
for me!"

And then Apollon prophesied, — I think,
More to himself than to impatient Death,
Who did not hear or would not heed the
while, —

For he went on to say "Yet even so,
Cruel above the measure, thou shalt clutch
No life here! Such a man do I perceive
Advancing to the house of Phereas now,
Sent by Eurustheus to bring out of Thrace,
20 The winter world, a chariot with its
steeds!"

He indeed, when Admetos proves the host,
And he the guest, at the house here, — he
it is

Shall bring to bear such force, and from
thy hands

Rescue this woman. Grace no whit to me
Will that prove, since thou dost thy deed
the same,

And earnest too my hate, and all for
nought!"

But how should Death or stay or under-
stand?

Doubtless, he only felt the hour was come,
And the sword free; for he but flung some
taunt —

30 "Having talked much, thou wilt not gain
the more!

This woman, then, descends to Hades'
hall

Now that I rush on her, begin the rites
Of the sword; for sacred, to us Gods below,
That head whose hair this sword shall
sanctify!"

And, in the fire-flash of the appalling
sword,

The uprush and the outburst, the onslaught
Of Death's portentous passage through the
door,

Apollon stood a pitying moment-space:
I caught one last gold gaze upon the night
Nearing the world now: and the God was 40
gone,

And mortals left to deal with misery,
As in came stealing slow, now this, now
that

Old sojourner throughout the country-side,
Servants grown friends to those unhappy
here:

And, cloudlike in their increase, all these
griefs

Broke and began the over-brimming wail,
Out of a common impulse, word by word.

"What now may mean the silence at the
door?"

Why is Admetos' mansion stricken dumb?
Not one friend near, to say if we should 50
mourn

Our mistress dead, or if Alkestis lives
And sees the light still, Pelias' child — to
me

To all, conspicuously the best of wives
That ever was toward husband in this
world!

Hears anyone or wail beneath the roof,
Or hands that strike each other, or the
groan

Announcing all is done and nought to
dread?

Still not a servant stationed at the gates!
O Paian, that thou wouldst dispart the
wave

O' the woe, be present! Yet, had woe 60
o'erwhelmed

The housemates, they were hardly silent
thus:

It cannot be, the dead is forth and gone.
Whence comes thy gleam of hope? I dare
not hope:

What is the circumstance that heartens
thee?

How could Admetos have dismissed a wife
So worthy, unescorted to the grave?

Before the gates I see no hallowed vase
Of fountain-water, such as suits death's
door;

Nor any clipt locks strew the vestibule,
Though surely these drop when we grieve 70
the dead,

Nor hand sounds smitten against youthful
hand,

The women's way. And yet — the ap-
pointed time —

How speak the word? — this day is even
the day

Ordained her for departing from its light.
O touch calamitous to heart and soul!

Needs must one, when the good are tortured so,
Sorrow, — one reckoned faithful from the first."

Then their souls rose together, and one sigh

Went up in cadence from the common mouth:

How "Vainly — anywhither in the world
Directing or land-labour or sea-search —
To Lukia or the sand-waste, Ammon's seat —

Might you set free their hapless lady's soul
From the abrupt Fate's footstep instant now.

10 Not a sheep-sacrificer at the hearths
Of Gods had they to go to: one there was
Who, if his eyes saw light still, — Phoibos' son, —

Had wrought so she might leave the shadowy place

And Hades' portal; for he propped up Death's

Subdued ones till the Zeus-flung thunder-flame

Struck him; and now what hope of life were hailed

With open arms? For, all the king could do
Is done already, — not one God whereof

20 The altar fails to reek with sacrifice:
And for assuagement of these evils — nought!"

But here they broke off, for a matron moved
Forth from the house: and, as her tears flowed fast,

They gathered round. "What fortune shall we hear?

For mourning thus, if aught affect thy lord,
We pardon thee: but lives the lady yet
Or has she perished? — that we fain would know!"

"Call her dead, call her living, each style serves,"

The matron said: "though grave-ward bowed, she breathed;

Nor knew her husband what the misery meant

30 Before he felt it: hope of life was none:
The appointed day pressed hard; the funeral pomp

He had prepared too."

When the friends broke out:
"Let her in dying know herself at least

Sole wife, of all the wives 'neath the sun wide,

For glory and for goodness!" — "Ah, how else

Than best? who controverts the claim?" — quoth she:

"What kind of creature should the woman prove

That has surpassed Alkestis? — surelier shown

Preference for her husband to herself
Than by determining to die for him?

But so much all our city knows indeed:

Hear what she did indoors and wonder then!

For, when she felt the crowning day was come,

She washed with river-waters her white skin,

And, taking from the cedar closets forth
Vesture and ornament, bedecked herself

Nobly, and stood before the hearth, and prayed:

'Mistress, because I now depart the world,
Falling before thee the last time, I ask —

Be mother to my orphans! wed the one 50
To a kind wife, and make the other's mate

Some princely person: nor, as I who bore
My children perish, suffer that they too

Die all untimely, but live, happy pair,
Their full glad life out in the fatherland!'

And every altar through Admetos' house
She visited and crowned and prayed

before,
Stripping the myrtle-foliage from the boughs,

Without a tear, without a groan, — no change

At all to that skin's nature, fair to see, 60
Caused by the imminent evil. But this

done —
Reaching her chamber, falling on her bed,

There, truly, burst she into tears and spoke:

'O bride-bed, where I loosened from my life

Virginity for that same husband's sake
Because of whom I die now — fare thee

well!
Since nowise do I hate thee: me alone

Hast thou destroyed; for, shrinking to betray

Thee and my spouse, I die: but thee, O bed,

Some other woman shall possess as wife — 70
Truer, no! but of better fortune, say!'

— So falls on, kisses it till all the couch
Is moistened with the eyes' sad overflow.

But, when of many tears she had her fill,
She flings from off the couch, goes headlong

forth,
Yet, — forth the chamber, — still keeps turning back

And casts her on the couch again once more.
Her children, clinging to their mother's

robe,
Wept meanwhile: but she took them in her

arms,
And, as a dying woman might, embraced 80
Now one and now the other: 'neath the

roof,

All of the household servants wept as well

Moved to compassion for their mistress;
she

Extended her right hand to all and each,
And there was no one of such low degree
She spoke not to nor had an answer from.
Such are the evils in Admetos' house.

Dying,—why, he had died; but, living,
gains

Such grief as this he never will forget!"

And when they questioned of Admetos,
"Well—

Holding his dear wife in his hands, he
weeps;

Entreats her not to give him up, and seeks
The impossible, in fine: for there she
wastes

And withers by disease, abandoned now,
A mere dead weight upon her husband's
arm.

Yet, none the less, although she breathe
so faint,

Her will is to behold the beams o' the sun:
Since never more again, but this last once,
Shall she see sun, its circlet or its ray.

But I will go, announce your presence, —
friends

Indeed; since 'tis not all so love their lords
As seek them in misfortune, kind the same:
But you are the old friends I recognise."

And at the word she turned again to go
The while they waited, taking up the plaint
To Zeus again: "What passage from this
strait?

What loosing of the heavy fortune fast
About the palace? Will such help appear,
Or must we clip the locks and cast around
Each form already the black peplos' fold?
Clearly the black robe, clearly! All the
same,

o Pray to the Gods! — like Gods' no power
so great!

O thou king Paian, find some way to save!
Reveal it, yea, reveal it! Since of old
Thou found'st a cure, why, now again
become

Releaser from the bonds of Death, we beg,
And give the sanguinary Hades pause!"
So the song dwindled into a mere moan,
How dear the wife, and what her husband's
woe;

When suddenly —

"Behold, behold!" breaks forth:
"Here is she coming from the house indeed!

o Her husband comes, too! Cry aloud, lament,
Pheraïan land, this best of women,
bound —

So is she withered by disease away —
For realms below and their infernal king!
Never will we affirm there's more of joy
Than grief in marriage; making estimate
Both from old sorrows anciently observed,

And this misfortune of the king we see —
Admetos who, of bravest spouse bereaved,
Will live life's remnant out, no life at all!"

So wailed they, while a sad procession 50
wound

Slow from the innermost o' the palace,
stopped

At the extreme verge of the platform-front:
There opened, and disclosed Alkestis' self,
The consecrated lady, borne to look
Her last — and let the living look their
last —

She at the sun, we at Alkestis.

We!

For would you note a memorable thing?
We grew to see in that severe regard, —

Hear in that hard dry pressure to the point,
Word slow pursuing word in monotone, — 60

What Death meant when he called her
consecrate

Henceforth to Hades. I believe, the
sword —

Its office was to cut the soul at once
From life, — from something in this
world which hides

Truth, and hides falsehood, and so lets us
live

Somehow. Suppose a rider furls a cloak
About a horse's head; unfrightened, so,
Between the menace of a flame, between
Solicitation of the pasturage,
Untempted equally, he goes his gait 70
To journey's end: then pluck the pharos
off!

Show what delusions steadied him i' the
straight

O' the path, made grass seem fire and fire
seem grass,

All through a little bandage o'er the eyes!
As certainly with eyes unbanded now

Alkestis looked upon the action here,
Self-immolation for Admetos' sake;

Saw, with a new sense, all her death would
do,

And which of her survivors had the right,
And which the less right, to survive thereby. 80

For, you shall note, she uttered no one
word

Of love more to her husband, though he
wept

Plenteously, waxed importunate in
prayer —

Folly's old fashion when its seed bears
fruit.

I think she judged that she had bought
the ware

O' the seller at its value, — nor praised
him

Nor blamed herself, but, with indifferent
eye,

Saw him purse money up, prepare to leave
The buyer with a solitary bale —

True purple — but in place of all that coin, 9

Had made a hundred others happy too,
If so willed fate or fortune! What remained

To give away, should rather go to these
Than one with coin to clink and contemplate.

Admetos had his share and might depart,
The rest was for her children and herself.
(Charopé makes a face: but wait awhile!)
She saw things plain as Gods do: by one stroke

O' the sword that rends the life-long veil away.

10 (Also Euripides saw plain enough:
But you and I, Charopé! — you and I
Will trust his sight until our own grow clear.)

"Sun, and thou light of day, and heavenly dance

O' the fleet cloud-figure!" (so her passion paused,

While the awe-stricken husband made his moan,

Muttered now this now that ineptitude:
"Sun that sees thee and me, a suffering pair,

Who did the Gods no wrong whence thou shouldst die!")

Then, as if caught up, carried in their course,

20 Fleeting and free as cloud and sunbeam are,

She missed no happiness that lay beneath:
"O thou wide earth, from these my palace roofs,

To distant nuptial chambers once my own
In that folk of my ancestry!" —

There the flight failed her. "Raise thee, wretched one!

Give us not up! Pray pity from the Gods!"

Vainly Admetos: for "I see it — see
The two-oared boat! The ferryer of the dead,

Charon, hand hard upon the boatman's pole,

30 Calls me — even now calls — 'Why delayest thou?

Quick! Thou obstructest all made ready here

For prompt departure: quick, then!"

"Woe is me!
A bitter voyage this to undergo,
Even i' the telling! Adverse Powers above,
How do ye plague us!"

Then a shiver ran:
"He has me — seest not? — hales me, — who is it? —

To the hall o' the Dead — ah, who but Hades' self,

He, with the wings there, glares at me, one gaze

All that blue brilliance, under the eyebrow!

What wilt thou do? Unhand me! Such a way

I have to traverse, all unhappy one!"

"Way — piteous to thy friends, but, most of all,

Me and thy children: ours assuredly
A common partnership in grief like this!"

Whereat they closed about her; but "Let be!

Leave, let me lie now! Strength forsakes my feet.

Hades is here, and shadowy on my eyes
Comes the night creeping. Children — children, now

Indeed, a mother is no more for you!
Farewell, O children, long enjoy the light!"

"Ah me, the melancholy word I hear,
Oppressive beyond every kind of death!
No, by the Deities, take heart nor dare
To give me up — no, by our children too
Made orphans of! But rise, be resolute,
Since, thou departed, I no more remain!
For in thee are we bound up, to exist
Or cease to be — so we adore thy love!"

— Which brought out truth to judgment.
At this word

And protestation, all the truth in her
Claimed to assert itself: she waved away
The blue-eyed black-wing'd phantom,
held in check

The advancing pageantry of Hades there,
And, with no change in her own countenance,

She fixed her eyes on the protesting man,
And let her lips unlock their sentence, — so!

"Admetos, — how things go with me thou seest, —

I wish to tell thee, ere I die, what things
I will should follow. I — to honour thee,
Secure for thee, by my own soul's exchange,
Continued looking on the daylight here —
Die for thee — yet, if so I pleased, might live,

Nay, wed what man of Thessaly I would,
And dwell i' the dome with pomp and queenliness.

I would not, — would not live bereft of thee,

With children orphaned, neither shrank at all,

Though having gifts of youth wherein I joyed.

Yet, who begot thee and who gave thee birth,

Both of these gave thee up; no less, a term

Of life was reached when death became them well,

Ay, well — to save their child and glorious die:

Since thou wast all they had, nor hope remained

Of having other children in thy place.

So, I and thou had lived out our full time,
Nor thou, left lonely of thy wife, wouldst groan

With children reared in orphanage: but thus

Some God disposed things, willed they so should be.

Be they so! Now do thou remember this,
Do me in turn a favour — favour, since

to Certainly I shall never claim my due,

For nothing is more precious than a life:
But a fit favour, as thyself wilt say,

Loving our children here no less than I,
If head and heart be sound in thee at least.

Uphold them, make them masters of my house,

Nor wed and give a step-dame to the pair,
Who, being a worse wife than I, thro' spite

Will raise her hand against both thine and mine.

Never do this at least, I pray to thee!

to For hostile the new-comer, the step-dame

To the old brood — a very viper she
For gentleness! Here stand they, boy and

girl;
The boy has got a father, a defence

Tower-like, he speaks to and has answer from:

But thou, my girl, how will thy virginhood
Conclude itself in marriage fittingly?

Upon what sort of sire-found yoke-fellow
Art thou to chance? with all to apprehend —

30 Lest, casting on thee some unkind report,

She blast thy nuptials in the bloom of youth.
For neither shall thy mother watch thee

wed,
Nor hearten thee in childbirth, standing by

Just when a mother's presence helps the most!

No, for I have to die: and this my ill
Comes to me, nor to-morrow, no, nor yet

The third day of the month, but now, even now,

I shall be reckoned among those no more.
Farewell, be happy! And to thee, indeed,

40 Husband, the boast remains permissible

Thou hadst a wife was worthy! and to you,
Children; as good a mother gave you birth."

"Have courage!" interposed the friends,
"For him

I have no scruple to declare — all this
Will he perform, except he fail of sense."

"All this shall be — shall be!" Admetos
sobbed:

"Fear not! And, since I had thee living,
dead

Alone wilt thou be called my wife: no fear

That some Thessalian ever styles herself
Bride, hails this man for husband in thy place!

No woman, be she of such lofty line 50
Or such surpassing beauty otherwise!

Enough of children: gain from these I have,
Such only may the Gods grant! since in thee

Absolute is our loss, where all was gain.
And I shall bear for thee no year-long grief,

But grief that lasts while my own days
last, love!

Love! For my hate is she who bore me,
now:

And him I hate, my father: loving-ones
Truly, in word not deed! But thou didst

pay
All dearest to thee down, and buy my life, 60

Saving me so! Is there not cause enough
That I who part with such companionship

In thee, should make my moan? I moan,
and more:

For I will end the feastings — social flow
O' the wine friends flock for, garlands and the Muse

That graced my dwelling. Never now
for me

To touch the lyre, to lift my soul in song
At summons of the Lydian flute; since thou

From out my life hast emptied all the joy!
And this thy body, in thy likeness wrought 70

By some wise hand of the artificers,
Shall lie disposed within my marriage-bed:

This I will fall on, this enfold about,
Call by thy name, — my dear wife in my

arms
Even though I have not, I shall seem to

have —
A cold delight, indeed, but all the same

So should I lighten of its weight my soul!
And, wandering my way in dreams per-

chance,
Thyself wilt bless me: for, come when they

will,
Even by night our loves are sweet to see. 80

But were the tongue and tune of Orpheus
mine,

So that to Koré¹ crying, or her lord,
In hymns, from Hades I might rescue

thee —
Down would I go, and neither Plouton's

dog
Nor Charon, he whose oar sends souls

across,
Should stay me till again I made thee stand

Living, within the light! But, failing this,
There, where thou art, await me when I

die,
Make ready our abode, my house-mare

still!
For in the self-same cedar, me with thee 94

Will I provide that these our friends shall
place,

¹ Proserpine.

My side lay close by thy side! Never,
corpse
Although I be, would I division bear
From thee, my faithful one of all the world!"

So he stood sobbing: nowise insincere,
But somehow child-like, like his children,
like

Childishness the world over. What was
new

In this announcement that his wife must
die?

What particle of pain beyond the pact
He made, with eyes wide open, long ago —
10 Made and was, if not glad, content to
make?

Now that the sorrow, he had called for,
came,

He sorrowed to the height: none heard
him say,

However, what would seem so pertinent,
"To keep this pact, I find surpass my
power:

Rescind it, Moirai! Give me back her
life,

And take the life I kept by base exchange!
Or, failing that, here stands your laughing-
stock

Foiled by you, worthy just the fate o' the
fool

Who makes a pother to escape the best
20 And gain the worst you wiser Powers
allot!"

No, not one word of this: nor did his
wife

Despite the sobbing, and the silence soon
To follow, judge so much was in his
thought —

Fancy that, should the Moirai acquiesce,
He would relinquish life nor let her die.

The man was like some merchant who, in
storm,

Throws the freight over to redeem the ship:
No question, saving both were better still.
As it was, — why, he sorrowed, which
sufficed.

30 So, all she seemed to notice in his speech
Was what concerned her children. Child-
ren, too,

Bear the grief and accept the sacrifice.

Rightly rules nature: does the blossomed
bough

O' the grape-vine, or the dry grape's self,
bleed wine?

So, bending to her children all her love,
She fastened on their father's only word
To purpose now, and followed it with
this.

"O children, now yourselves have heard
these things —

Your father saying he will never wed
40 Another woman to be over you,
Nor yet dishonour me!"

"And now at least
I say it, and I will accomplish too!"

"Then, for such promise of accomplish-
ment,
Take from my hand these children!"

"Thus I take —
Dear gift from the dear hand!"

"Do thou become
Mother, now, to these children in my
place!"

"Great the necessity I should be so,
At least, to these bereaved of thee!"

"Child — child!
Just when I needed most to live, below
Am I departing from you both!" 50

"Ah me!
And what shall I do, then, left lonely thus?"

"Time will appease thee: who is dead is
nought."

"Take me with thee — take, by the Gods
below!"

"We are sufficient, we who die for thee."

"Oh, Powers, ye widow me of what a
wife!"

"And truly the dimmed eye draws earth-
ward now!"

"Wife, if thou leav'st me, I am lost indeed!"

"She once was — now is nothing, thou
mayst say."

"Raise thy face nor forsake thy children
thus!"

"Ah, willingly indeed I leave them not! 60
But — fare ye well, my children!"

"Look on them —
Look!"

"I am nothingness."

"What dost thou? Leav'st . . ."

"Farewell."

And in the breath she passed away.
"Undone — me miserable!" moaned the
king,

While friends released the long-suspended
sigh

"Gone is she: no wife for Admetos more!"

Such was the signal: how the woe broke
forth,

Why tell? — or how the children's tears
 ran fast
 Bidding their father note the eyelids' stare,
 Hands' droop, each dreadful circumstance
 of death.

"Ay, she hears not, she sees not: I and you,
 'Tis plain, are stricken hard and have to
 bear!"

Was all Admetos answered; for, I judge,
 He only now began to taste the truth:
 The thing done lay revealed, which undone
 thing,

Rehearsed for fact by fancy, at the best,
 Never can equal. He had used himself
 This long while (as he muttered presently)
 To practise with the terms, the blow in-
 volved

By the bargain, sharp to bear, but bearable
 Because of plain advantage at the end.
 Now that, in fact not fancy, the blow fell —
 Needs must he busy him with the surprise.
 "Alkestis — not to see her nor be seen,
 Hear nor be heard of by her, any more
 To-day, to-morrow, to the end of time —
 Did I mean this should buy my life?"
 thought he.

So, friends came round him, took him by
 the hand,
 Bade him remember our mortality,
 Its due, its doom: how neither was he first,
 Nor would be last, to thus deplore the
 loved.

"I understand" slow the words came at
 last.

"Nor of a sudden did the evil here
 Fly on me: I have known it long ago,
 Ay, and essayed myself in misery;
 Nothing is new. You have to stay, you
 friends,

Because the next need is to carry forth
 The corpse here: you must stay and do
 your part,

Chant proper pæan to the God below;
 Drink-sacrifice he likes not. I decree
 That all Thessalians over whom I rule
 hold grief in common with me; let them
 shear

Their locks, and be the peplos black they
 show!

And you who to the chariot yoke your
 steeds,

Or manage steeds one-frontleted, — I
 charge,

Clip from each neck with steel the mane
 away!

And through my city, nor of flute nor
 lyre

Be there a sound till twelve full moons
 succeed.

For I shall never bury any corpse
 Dearer than this to me, nor better friend:

One worthy of all honour from me, since
 Me she has died for, she and she alone."

With that, he sought the inmost of the
 house,

He and his dead, to get grave's garniture,
 While the friends sang the pæan that
 should peal.

"Daughter of Pelias, with farewell from
 me,

I' the house of Hades have thy unsunned 5
 home!

Let Hades know, the dark-haired deity, —
 And he who sits to row and steer alike,
 Old corpse-conductor, let him know he
 bears

Over the Acherontian lake, this time,
 I' the two-oared boat, the best — oh, best
 by far

Of womankind! For thee, Alkestis Queen!
 Many a time those haunters of the Muse
 Shall sing thee to the seven-stringed moun-
 tain-shell,

And glorify in hymns that need no harp,
 At Sparta when the cycle comes about, 60
 And that Karneian month wherein the
 moon

Rises and never sets the whole night
 through:

So too at splendid and magnificent
 Athenai. Such the spread of thy renown,
 And such the lay that, dying, thou hast left
 Singer and sayer. O that I availed
 Of my own might to send thee once again
 From Hades' hall, Kokutos' stream, by
 help

O' the oar that dips the river, back to
 day!"

So, the song sank to prattle in her praise: 70
 "Light, from above thee, lady, fall the
 earth,

Thou only one of womankind to die,
 Wife for her husband! If Admetos take
 Anything to him like a second spouse —
 Hate from his offspring and from us shall
 be

His portion, let the king assure himself!
 No mind his mother had to hide in earth
 Her body for her son's sake, nor his sire
 Had heart to save whom he begot, — not
 they,

The white-haired wretches! only thou it 80
 was,

I' the bloom of youth, didst save him and
 so die!

Might it be mine to chance on such a mate
 And partner! For there's penury in life
 Of such allowance: were she mine at least,
 So wonderful a wife, assuredly
 She would companion me throughout my
 days

And never once bring sorrow!"

A great voice —

"My hosts here!"

Oh, the thrill that ran through us
Never was aught so good and opportune
As that great interrupting voice! For see!
Here maundered this dispirited old age
Before the palace; whence a something
crept

Which told us well enough without a word
What was a-doing inside,—every touch
O' the garland on those temples, tenderest
Disposure of each arm along its side,

10 Came putting out what warmth? the world
was left.

Then, as it happens at a sacrifice
When, drop by drop, some lustral bath is
brimmed:

Into the thin and clear and cold, at once
They, slaughter a whole wine-skin:
Bacchos' blood

Sets the white water all a-flame; even so,
Sudden into the midst of sorrow, leapt
Along with the gay cheer of that great
voice,

Hope, joy, salvation: Herakles was here!
Himself, o' the threshold, sent his voice on
first

20 To herald all that human and divine
I' the weary happy face of him,—half
God,

Half man, which made the god-part God
the more.

"Hosts mine," he broke upon the sorrow
with,

"Inhabitants of this Pheraia soil,
Chance I upon Admetos inside here?"

The irresistible sound wholesome heart
O' the hero,—more than all the mighti-
ness

At labour in the limbs that, for man's sake,
Labour'd and meant to labour their life
long,—

30 This drove back, dried up sorrow at its
source.

How could it brave the happy weary laugh
Of who had bantered sorrow, "Sorrow
here?"

What have you done to keep your friend
from harm?

Could no one give the life I see he keeps?
Or, say there's sorrow here past friendly
help,

Why waste a word or let a tear escape
While other sorrows wait you in the world,
And want the life of you, though helpless
here?"

Clearly there was no telling such an one

40 How, when their monarch tried who loved
him more

Than he loved them, and found they loved,
as he,

Each man, himself, and held, no otherwise,
That, of all evils in the world, the worst

Was — being forced to die, whate'er death
gain:

How all this selfishness in him and them
Caused certain sorrow which they sang
about,—

I think that Herakles, who held his life
Out on his hand, for any man to take —
I think his laugh had marred their threnody.

"He is in the house," they answered. 50

After all,
They might have told the story, talked
their best

About the inevitable sorrow here,
Nor changed nor checked the kindly
nature,—no!

So long as men were merely weak, not bad,
He loved men: were they Gods he used to
help?

"Yea, Pheres' son is in-doors, Herakles.
But say, what sends thee to Thessalian soil,
Brought by what business to this Pherai
town?"

"A certain labour that I have to do
Eurustheus the Tirunthian," laughed the 60
God.

"And whither wendest — on what wan-
dering

Bound now?" (they had an instinct,
guessed what meant

Wanderings, labours, in the God's light
mouth.)

"After the Thrakian Diomedes' car
With the four horses."

"Ah, but canst thou that?
Art inexperienced in thy host to be?"

"All-inexperienced: I have never gone
As yet to the land o' the Bistones."

"Then, look
By no means to be master of the steeds
Without a battle!" 70

"Battle there may be:
I must refuse no labour, all the same."

"Certainly, either having slain a foe
Wilt thou return to us, or, slain thyself,
Stay there!"

"And, even if the game be so,
The risk in it were not the first I run."

"But, say thou overpower the lord o' the
place,
What more advantage dost expect
thereby?"

"I shall drive off his horses to the king."

"No easy handling them to bit the jaw!"

"Easy enough; except, at least, they
breathe
Fire from their nostrils!"
"But they mince up men
With those quick jaws!"

"You talk of provender
For mountain-beasts, and not mere horses'
food!"

Thou mayst behold their mangers caked
with gore!"

"And of what sire does he who bred them
boast
Himself the son?"

"Of Ares, king o' the targe —
Thrakian, of gold throughout."

Another laugh.
"Why, just the labour, just the lot for me
Dost thou describe in what I recognise!
Since hard and harder, high and higher
yet,

Truly this lot of mine is like to go
If I must needs join battle with the brood
Of Ares: ay, I fought Lukaon first,
And again, Kuknos: now engage in strife
This third time, with such horses and such
lord.

But there is nobody shall ever see
Alkmené's son shrink foemen's hand
before!"

— "Or ever hear him say" (the Chorus
thought)

"That death is terrible; and help us so
To chime in — 'terrible beyond a doubt,
And, if to thee, why, to ourselves much
more:

Know what has happened, then, and
sympathise'!"

Therefore they gladly stopped the dialogue,
Shifted the burthen to new shoulder
straight,

As, "Look where comes the lord o' the
land, himself,

Admetos, from the palace!" they outbroke
In some surprise, as well as much relief.

What had induced the king to waive his
right

And luxury of woe in loneliness?

Out he came quietly; the hair was clipt,
And the garb sable; else no outward sign
Of sorrow as he came and faced his friend.
Was truth fast terrifying tears away?

"Hail, child of Zeus, and sprung from
Perseus too!"

The salutation ran without a fault.

"And thou, Admetos, King of Thessaly!"

"Would, as thou wishest me, the grace
might fall!

But my good-wisher, that thou art, I know."

"What's here? these shorn locks, this sad 4'
show of thee?"

"I must inter a certain corpse to-day."

"Now, from thy children God avert mis-
chance!"

"They live, my children; all are in the
house!"

"Thy father — if 'tis he departs indeed,
His age was ripe at least."

"My father lives,
And she who bore me lives too, Herakles."

"It cannot be thy wife Alkestis gone?"

"Two-fold the tale is, I can tell of her."

"Dead dost thou speak of her, or living
yet?"

"She is — and is not: hence the pain to 50
me!"

"I learn no whit the more, so dark thy
speech!"

"Know'st thou not on what fate she needs
must fall?"

"I know she is resigned to die for thee."

"How lives she still, then, if submitting
so?"

"Eh, weep her not beforehand! wait till
then!"

"Who is to die is dead; doing is done."

"To be and not to be are thought diverse."

"Thou judgest this — I, that way,
Herakles!"

"Well, but declare what causes thy com-
plaint!

Who is the man has died from out thy 60
friends?"

"No man: I had a woman in my
mind."

"Alien, or someone born akin to thee?"

"Alien: but still related to my house."

"How did it happen then that here she
died?"

"Her father dying left his orphan here."

"Alas, Admetos — would we found thee
 gay,
 Not grieving!"

"What as if about to do
 Subjoinest thou that comment?"

I shall seek
 Another hearth, proceed to other hosts."

"Never, O king, shall that be! No such
 ill
 Betide me!"

"Nay, to mourners should there
 come
 A guest, he proves importunate!"

"The dead —
 Dead are they: but go thou within my
 house!"

"'Tis base carousing beside friends who
 mourn."

20 "The guest-rooms, whither we shall lead
 thee, lie
 Apart from ours."

"Nay, let me go my way!
 Ten thousandfold the favour I shall
 thank!"

"It may not be thou goest to the hearth
 Of any man but me!" so made an end
 Admetos, softly and decisively,
 Of the altercation. Herakles forbore:
 And the king bade a servant lead the way,
 Open the guest-rooms ranged remote from
 view

O' the main hall; tell the functionaries,
 next,

25 They had to furnish forth a plenteous feast,
 And then shut close the doors o' the hall,
 midway,

"Because it is not proper friends who feast
 Should hear a groaning or be grieved,"
 quoth he.

Whereat the hero, who was truth itself,
 Let out the smile again, repressed awhile
 Like fountain-brilliance one forbids to
 play.

He did too many grandnesses, to note
 Much in the meaner things about his path:
 And stepping there, with face towards the
 sun,

30 Stopped seldom to pluck weeds or ask their
 names.

Therefore he took Admetos at the word:
 This trouble must not hinder any more
 A true heart from good will and pleasant
 ways.

And so, the great arm, which had slain
 the snake,
 Strained his friend's head a moment in
 embrace

On that broad breast beneath the lion's
 hide,

Till the king's cheek winced at the thick
 rough gold;

And then strode off, with who had care of
 him,

To the remote guest-chamber: glad to give
 Poor flesh and blood their respite and
 relief

In the interval 'twixt fight and fight again —
 All for the world's sake. Our eyes fol-
 lowed him,

Be sure, till those mid-doors shut us
 outside.

The king, too, watched great Herakles go off
 All faith, love, and obedience to a friend.

And when they questioned him, the simple
 ones,

"What dost thou? Such calamity to face,
 Lies full before thee — and thou art so
 bold

As play the host, Admetos? Hast thy
 wits?"

He replied calmly to each chiding tongue: 50
 "But if from house and home I forced
 away

A coming guest, wouldst thou have praised
 me more?

No, truly! since calamity were mine,
 Nowise diminished; while I showed myself
 Unhappy and inhospitable too:

So adding to my ills this other ill,
 That mine were styled a stranger-hating
 house.

Myself have ever found this man the best
 Of entertainers when I went his way
 To parched and thirsty Argos." 60

"If so be —
 Why didst thou hide what destiny was here,
 When one came that was kindly, as thou
 say'st?"

"He never would have willed to cross my
 door

Had he known aught of my calamities.
 And probably to some of you I seem
 Unwise enough in doing what I do;
 Such will scarce praise me: but these halls
 of mine

Know not to drive off and dishonour
 guests."

And so, the duty done, he turned once more
 To go and busy him about his dead. 70

As for the sympathisers left to muse,
 There was a change, a new light thrown
 on things,

Contagion from the magnanimity
 O' the man whose life lay on his hand so
 light,

As up he stepped, pursuing duty still
 "Higher and harder," as he laughed and
 said.

Somehow they found no folly now in the act
They blamed erewhile: Admetos' private
grief

Shrank to a somewhat pettier obstacle
I' the way o' the world: they saw good
days had been,

And good days, peradventure, still might
be,

Now that they overlooked the present cloud
Heavy upon the palace opposite.

And soon the thought took words and
music thus.

"Harbour of many a stranger, free to
friend,

10 Ever and always, O thou house o' the man
We mourn for! The Apollon's very self,
The lyric Puthian,¹ deigned inhabit once,
Become a shepherd here in thy domains,
And pipe, adown the winding hill-side
paths,

Pastoral marriage-poems to thy flocks
At feed: while with them fed in fellowship,
Through joy i' the music, spot-skin lynxes,
ay,

And lions too, the bloody company,
Came, leaving Othrus' dell;² and round
thy lyre,

20 Phoibos, there danced the speckle-coated
fawn,
Pacing on lightsome fetlock past the pines
Tress-topped, the creature's natural bound-
ary,

Into the open everywhere; such heart
Had she within her, beating joyous beats,
At the sweet reassurance of thy song!
Therefore the lot o' the master is, to live
In a home multitudinous with herds,
Along by the fair-flowing Boibian lake,³
Limited, that ploughed land and pasture-
plain,

30 Only where stand the sun's steeds, stabled
west

I' the cloud, by that mid-air which makes
the clime

Of those Molossoi: and he rules as well
O'er the Aigaian, up to Pelion's shore, —
Sea-stretch without a port! Such lord
have we:

And here he opens house now, as of old,
Takes to the heart of it a guest again:
Though moist the eyelid of the master, still
Mourning his dear wife's body, dead but
now!"

And they admired: nobility of soul
40 Was self-impelled to reverence, they saw:
The best men ever prove the wisest too:
Something instinctive guides them still
aright.

¹ Apollo was so called on account of his vic-
tory over the Python.

² The home of the Centaurs in Thessaly.

³ In Thessaly.

And on each soul this boldness settled now,
That one, who revered the Gods so
much,

Would prosper yet: (or — I could wish it
ran —

Who venerates the Gods, i' the main will
still

Practise things honest though obscure to
judge).

They ended, for Admetos entered now;
Having disposed all duteously indoors,
He came into the outside world again, 50
Quiet as ever: but a quietude
Bent on pursuing its descent to truth,
As who must grope until he gain the ground
O' the dungeon doomed to be his dwelling
now.

Already high o'er head was piled the dusk,
When something pushed to stay his down-
ward step,

Pluck back despair just reaching its repose.
He would have bidden the kind presence
there

Observe that, — since the corpse was
coming out,
Cared for in all things that befitted the case, 60
Carried aloft, in decency and state,
To the last burial place and burning pile, —
'Twere proper friends addressed, as custom
prompts,

Alkestis bound on her last journeying.

"Ay, for we see thy father," they subjoined
"Advancing as the aged foot best may;
His servants, too: each bringing in his hand
Adornments for thy wife, all pomp that's
due

To the downward-dwelling people." And
in truth,

By slow procession till they filled the stage, 70
Came Pheres, and his following, and their
gifts.

You see, the worst of the interruption was,
It plucked back, with an over-hasty hand,
Admetos from descending to the truth,
(I told you) — put him on the brink again,
Full i' the noise and glare where late he
stood:

With no fate fallen and irrevocable,
But all things subject still to chance and
change:

And that chance — life, and that change —
happiness.

And with the low strife came the little 80
mind:

He was once more the man might gain so
much,

Life too and wife too, would his friends
but help!

All he felt now was that there faced him
one

Supposed the likeliest, in emergency,
To help: and help, by mere self-sacrifice

So natural, it seemed as if the sire
Must needs lie open still to argument,
Withdraw the rash decision, not to die
But rather live, though death would save
his son: —

Argument like the ignominious grasp
O' the drowner whom his fellow grasps
as fierce,

Each marvelling that the other needs must
hold

Head out of water, though friend choke
thereby.

And first the father's salutation fell.

10 Burthened, he came, in common with his
child,

Who lost, none would gainsay, a good
chaste spouse:

Yet such things must be borne, though
hard to bear.

"So, take this tribute of adornment, deep
In the earth let it descend along with her!
Behoves we treat the body with respect
— Of one who died, at least, to save thy
life,

Kept me from being childless, nor allowed
That I, bereft of thee, should peak and pine
In melancholy age! she, for the sex,

20 All of her sisters, put in evidence,
By daring such a feat, that female life
Might prove more excellent than men sup-
pose.

O thou Alkestis!" out he burst in fine,
"Who, while thou savedst this my son,
didst raise

Also myself from sinking, — hail to thee!
Well be it with thee even in the house
Of Hades! I maintain, if mortals must
Marry, this sort of marriage is the sole
Permitted those among them who are
wise!"

30 So his oration ended. Like hates like:
Accordingly Admetos, — full i' the face
Of Pheres, his true father, outward shape
And inward fashion, body matching soul, —
Saw just himself when years should do
their work

And reinforce the selfishness inside
Until it pushed the last disguise away:
As when the liquid metal cools i' the mould,
Stands forth a statue: bloodless, hard, cold
bronze.

So, in old Pheres, young Admetos showed,
40 Pushed to completion: and a shudder ran,
And his repugnance soon had vent in
speech:

Glad to escape outside, nor, pent within,
Find itself there fit food for exercise.

"Neither to this interment called by me

Comest thou, nor thy presence I account
Among the covetable proofs of love.

As for thy tribute of adornment, — no!
Ne'er shall she don it, ne'er in debt to thee

Be buried! What is thine, that keep thou
still!

Then it behoved thee to commiserate 50
When I was perishing: but thou — who
stood'st

Foot-free o' the snare, wast acquiescent
then

That I, the young, should die, not thou,
the old —

Wilt thou lament this corpse thyself hast
slain?

Thou wast not, then, true father to this
flesh;

Nor she, who makes profession of my birth
And styles herself my mother, neither she
Bore me: but, come of slave's blood, I was
cast

Stealthily 'neath the bosom of thy wife!
Thou showedst, put to touch, the thing thou 60
art,

Nor I esteem myself born child of thee!
Otherwise, thine is the preëminence

O'er all the world in cowardice of soul:
Who, being the old man thou art, arrived

Where life should end, didst neither will
nor dare

Die for thy son, but left the task to her,
The alien woman, whom I well might
think

Own, only mother both and father too!
And yet a fair strife had been thine to

strive,
— Dying for thy own child; and brief for 70
thee

In any case, the rest of time to live;
While I had lived, and she, our rest of time,
Nor I been left to groan in solitude.

Yet certainly all things which happy man
Ought to experience, thy experience
grasped.

Thou wast a ruler through the bloom of
youth,

And I was son to thee, recipient due
Of sceptre and demesne, — no need to fear
That dying thou shouldst leave an orphan
house

For strangers to despoil. Nor yet wilt 80
thou

Allege that as dishonouring, forsooth,
Thy length of days, I gave thee up to die, —

I, who have held thee in such reverence!
And in exchange for it, such gratitude

Thou, father, — thou award'st me, mothe
mine!

Go, lose no time, then, in begetting son
Shall cherish thee in age, and, when thou
diest,

Deck up and lay thee out as corpses claim!
For never I, at least, with this my hand

Will bury thee: it is myself am dead 90
So far as lies in thee. But if I light

Upon another saviour, and still see
The sunbeam, — his, the child I call
myself,

His, the old age that claims my cherishing.
How vainly do these aged pray for death,
Abuse the slow drag of senility!
But should death step up, nobody inclines
To die, nor age is now the weight it was!"

You see what all this poor pretentious talk
Tried at, — how weakness strove to hide
itself

In bluster against weakness, — the loud
word

To hide the little whisper, not so low
10 Already in that heart beneath those lips!
Ha, could it be, who hated cowardice
Stood confessed craven, and who lauded so
Self-immolating love, himself had pushed
The loved one to the altar in his place?
Friends interposed, would fain stop further

play
O' the sharp-edged tongue: they felt love's
champion here

Had left an undefended point or two,
The antagonist might profit by; bade
"Pause!

Enough the present sorrow! Nor, O son,
20 Whet thus against thyself thy father's
soul!"

Ay, but old Pheres was the stouter stuff!
Admetos, at the flintiest of the heart,
Had so much soft in him as held a fire:
The other was all iron, clashed from flint
Its fire, but shed no spark and showed no
bruise.

Did Pheres crave instruction as to facts?
He came, content, the ignoble word, for
him,

Should lurk still in the blackness of each
breast,

As sleeps the water-serpent half surmised:
30 Not brought up to the surface at a bound,
By one touch of the idly-probing spear,
Reed-like against unconquerable scale.
He came pacific, rather, as strength should,
Bringing the decent praise, the due regret,
And each banality prescribed of old.
Did he commence "Why let her die for
you?"

And rouse the coiled and quiet ugliness
"What is so good to man as man's own
life?"

No: but the other did: and, for his pains,
40 Out, full in face of him, the venom leapt.

"And whom dost thou make bold, son —
Ludian slave,

Or Phrugian whether, money made thy
ware,

To drive at with revilings? Know'st thou
not

I, a Thessalian, from Thessalian sire
Spring and am born legitimately free?

Too arrogant art thou; and, youngster
words

Casting against me, having had thy fling,
Thou goest not off as all were ended so!
I gave thee birth indeed and mastership
1' the mansion, brought thee up to boot: 50
there ends

My owing, nor extends to die for thee!
Never did I receive it as a law
Hereditary, no, nor Greek at all,
That sires in place of sons were bound to
die.

For, to thy sole and single self wast thou
Born, with whatever fortune, good or bad;
Such things as bear bestowment, those thou
hast;

Already ruling widely, broad-lands, too,
Doubt not but I shall leave thee in due
time:

For why? My father left me them before. 60
Well then, where wrong I thee? — of what
defraud?

Neither do thou die for this man, myself,
Nor let him die for thee! — is all I beg.

Thou joyest seeing daylight: dost suppose
Thy father joys not too? Undoubtedly,
Long I account the time to pass below,
And brief my span of days; yet sweet the
same:

Is it otherwise to thee who, impudent,
Didst fight off this same death, and livest
now

Through having sneaked past fate appor- 70
tioned thee,

And slain thy wife so? Cryest cowardice
On me, I wonder, thou — whom, poor
poltroon,

A very woman worsted, daring death
Just for the sake of thee, her handsome
spark?

Shrewdly hast thou contrived how not to
die

For ever more now: 'tis but still persuade
The wife, for the time being, to take thy
place!

What, and thy friends who would not do
the like,

These dost thou carp at, craven thus thy-
self?

Crouch and be silent, craven! Compre- 80
hend

That, if thou lovest so that life of thine,
Why, everybody loves his own life too:

So, good words, henceforth! If thou
speak us ill,

Many and true an ill thing shalt thou
hear!"

There you saw leap the hydra at full
length!

Only, the old kept glorying the more,
The more the portent thus uncoiled itself
Whereas the young man shuddered head
to foot,

And shrank from kinship with the creature.
Why

- Such horror, unless what he hated
most,
Vaunting itself outside, might fairly claim
Acquaintance with the counterpart at
home?
I would the Chorus here had plucked up
heart,
Spoken out boldly and explained the
man,
If not to men, to Gods. That way, I
think,
Sophokles would have led their dance and
song.
Here, they said simply "Too much evil
spoke
On both sides!" As the young before, so
now
10 They bade the old man leave abusing thus.
- "Let him speak, — I have spoken!" said
the youth:
And so died out the wrangle by degrees
In wretched bickering. "If thou wince
at fact,
Behoved thee not prove faulty to myself!"
"Had I died for thee I had faulted more!"
"All's one, then, for youth's bloom and
age to die?"
"Our duty is to live one life, not two!"
"Go then, and outlive Zeus, for aught I
care!"
"What, curse thy parents with no sort of
cause?"
20 "Curse, truly! All thou lovest is long
life!"
"And dost not thou, too, all for love of life,
Carry out now, in place of thine, this
corpse?"
"Monument, rather, of thy cowardice,
Thou worst one!"
"Not for me she died, I hope!
That, thou wilt hardly say!"
"No, simply this:
Would, some day, thou mayst come to need
myself!"
"Meanwhile, woo many wives — the more
will die!"
"And so shame thee who never dared the
like!"
"Dear is this light o' the sun-god — dear,
I say!"
30 "Proper conclusion for a beast to draw!"
- "One thing is certain: there's no laughing
now,
As out thou bearest the poor dead old man!"
"Die when thou wilt, thou wilt die in-
famous!"
"And once dead, whether famed or in-
famous,
I shall not care!"
"Alas and yet again!
How full is age of impudency!"
"True!
Thou couldst not call thy young wife im-
pudent:
She was found foolish merely."
"Get thee gone!
And let me bury this my dead!"
"I go.
Thou buriest her whom thou didst murder 40
first;
Whereof there's some account to render yet
Those kinsfolk by the marriage-side! I
think,
Brother Akastos may be classed with me,
Among the beasts, not men, if he omit
Avenging upon thee his sister's blood!"
"Go to perdition, with thy housemate too!
Grow old all childlessly, with child alive,
Just as ye merit! for to me, at least,
Beneath the same roof ne'er do ye return.
And did I need by heralds' help renounce 50
The ancestral hearth, I had renounced
the same!
But we — since this woe, lying at our feet
I' the path, is to be borne — let us proceed
And lay the body on the pyre."
I think,
What, thro' this wretched wrangle, kept
the man
From seeing clear — beside the cause I
gave —
Was, that the woe, himself described as
full
I' the path before him, there did really
lie —
Not roll into the abyss of dead and gone.
How, with Alkestis present, calmly 60
crowned,
Was she so irrecoverable yet —
The bird, escaped, that's just on bough
above,
The flower, let flutter half-way down the
brink?
Not so detached seemed lifelessness from
life
But — one dear stretch beyond all strain-
ing yet —
And he might have her at his heart once
more,
When, in the critical minute, up there
comes
The father and the fact, to trifle time!

"To the pyre!" an instinct prompted:
 pallid face,
 And passive arm and pointed foot, when
 these
 No longer shall absorb the sight, O friends,
 Admetos will begin to see indeed
 Who the true foe was, where the blows
 should fall!

So, the old selfish Pheres went his way,
 Case-hardened as he came; and left the
 youth,
 (Only half-selfish now, since sensitive)
 To go on learning by a light the more,
 As friends moved off, renewing dirge the
 while:

"Unhappy in thy daring! Noble dame,
 Best of the good, farewell! With favour-
 ing face
 May Hermes the infernal, Hades too,
 Receive thee! And if there, — ay, there,
 — some touch
 Of further dignity await the good,
 Sharing with them, mayst thou sit throned
 by her
 The Bride of Hades, in companionship!"

Wherewith, the sad procession wound
 away,
 Made slowly for the suburb sepulchre.
 And lo, — while still one's heart, in time
 and tune,
 Paced after that symmetric step of Death
 Mute-marching, to the mind's eye, at the
 head
 O' the mourners — one hand pointing out
 their path
 With the long pale terrific sword we saw,
 The other leading, with grim tender grace,
 Alkestis quieted and consecrate, —
 Lo, life again knocked laughing at the
 door!
 The world goes on, goes ever, in and
 through,
 And out again o' the cloud. We faced
 about,
 Fronted the palace where the mid-hall-gate
 Opened — not half, nor half of half,
 perhaps —
 Yet wide enough to let out light and life,
 And warmth and bounty and hope and
 joy, at once.
 Festivity burst wide, fruit rare and ripe
 Crushed in the mouth of Bacchos, pulpy-
 prime,
 All juice and flavour, save one single seed
 Duly ejected from the God's nice lip,
 Which lay o' the red edge, blackly visi-
 ble —
 To wit, a certain ancient servitor:
 On whom the festal jaws o' the palace shut,
 So, there he stood, a much-bewildered man.
 Stupid? Nay, but sagacious in a sort:

Learned, life long, i' the first outside of
 things,
 Though bat for blindness to what lies
 beneath
 And needs a nail-scratch ere 'tis laid you
 bare.
 This functionary was the trusted one
 We saw deputed by Admetos late
 To lead in Herakles and help him, soul
 And body, to such snatched repose,
 snapped-up
 Sustainment, as might do away the dust 50
 O' the last encounter, knit each nerve anew
 For that next onset sure to come at cry
 O' the creature next assailed, — nay,
 should it prove
 Only the creature that came forward now
 To play the critic upon Herakles!

"Many the guests" — so he soliloquised
 In misings burdensome to breast before,
 When it seemed not too prudent tongue
 should wag —
 "Many, and from all quarters of this world,
 The guests I now have known frequent our 60
 house,
 For whom I spread the banquet; but than
 this,
 Never a worse one did I yet receive
 At the hearth here! One who seeing,
 first of all,
 The master's sorrow, entered gate the
 same,
 And had the hardihood to house himself.
 Did things stop there! But, modest by
 no means,
 He took what entertainment lay to hand,
 Knowing of our misfortune, — did we fail
 In aught of the fit service, urged us serve
 just as a guest expects! And in his hands 70
 Taking the ivied goblet, drinks and drinks
 The unmixed product of black mother-
 earth,
 Until the blaze o' the wine went round
 about
 And warmed him: then he crowns with
 myrtle sprigs
 His head, and howls discordance — two-
 fold lay
 Was thereupon for us to listen to —
 This fellow singing, namely, nor restrained
 A jot by sympathy with sorrows here —
 While we o' the household mourned our
 mistress — mourned,
 That is to say, in silence — never showed 80
 The eyes, which we kept wetting, to the
 guest —
 For there Admetos was imperative.
 And so, here am I helping make at home
 A guest, some fellow ripe for wickedness,
 Robber or pirate, while she goes her way
 Out of our house: and neither was it mine
 To follow in procession, nor stretch forth
 Hand, wave my lady dear a last farewell,

Lamenting who to me and all of us
Domestics was a mother: myriad harms
She used to ward away from everyone,
And mollify her husband's ireful mood.
I ask then, do I justly hate or no
This guest, this interloper on our grief?"

"Hate him and justly!" Here's the
proper judge

Of what is due to the house from Herakles!
This man of much experience saw the first

10 Of the feeble duckings-down at destiny,
When King Admetos went his rounds, poor
soul,

A-begging somebody to be so brave

As die for one afraid to die himself —

"Thou, friend? Thou, love? Father or
mother, then!

None of you? What, Alkestis must Death
catch?

O best of wives, one woman in the world!
But nowise droop: our prayers may still
assist:

Let us try sacrifice; if those avail

Nothing and Gods avert their countenance,

20 Why, deep and durable our grief will
be!"

Whereat the house, this worthy at its head,
Re-echoed "deep and durable our grief!"

This sage, who justly hated Herakles,

Did he suggest once "Rather I than she!"

Admonish the Turannos — "Be a man!

Bear thine own burden, never think to
thrust

Thy fate upon another and thy wife!

It were a dubious gain could death be
doomed

That other, and no passionatest plea

30 Of thine, to die instead, have force with
fate;

Seeing thou lov'st Alkestis: what were life

Unlighted by the loved one? But to live —

Not merely live unsolaced by some thought,
Some word so poor — yet solace all the
same —

As 'Thou i' the sepulchre, Alkestis, say!

Would I, or would not I, to save thy life,

Die, and die on, and die for evermore?"

No! but to read red-written up and down

The world 'This is the sunshine, this
the shade,

40 This is some pleasure of earth, sky or sea,
Due to that other, dead that thou mayst
live!"

Such were a covetable gain to thee?

Go die, fool, and be happy while 'tis time!"

One word of counsel in this kind, methinks,

Had fallen to better purpose than Ai, ai,

Pheu, pheu, e, papai, and a pother of praise

O' the best, best, best one! Nothing was
to hate

In King Admetos, Pheres, and the rest

O' the household down to his heroic self!

50 This was the one thing hateful: Herakles

Had flung into the presence, frank and
free,

Out from the labour into the repose,
Ere out again and over head and ears

I' the heart of labour, all for love of men:
Making the most o' the minute, that the
soul

And body, strained to height a minute
since,

Might lie relaxed in joy, this breathing-
space,

For man's sake more than ever; till the
bow,

Restrung o' the sudden, at first cry for
help,

Should send some unimaginable shaft 60

True to the aim and shatteringly through

The plate-mail of a monster, save man so.

He slew the pest o' the marish yesterday:

To-morrow he would bit the flame-
breathed stud

That fed on man's-flesh: and this day
between —

Because he held it natural to die,

And fruitless to lament a thing past cure,

So, took his fill of food, wine, song and
flowers,

Till the new labour claimed him soon
enough, —

"Hate him and justly!" 70

True, Charopé mine!

The man surmised not Herakles lay hid

I' the guest; or, knowing it, was ignorant

That still his lady lived — for Herakles;

Or else judged lightness needs must indi-
cate

This or the other caitiff quality:

And therefore — had been right if not so
wrong!

For who expects the sort of him will scratch
A nail's depth, scrape the surface just to
see

What peradventure underlies the same?

So, he stood petting up his puny hate, 80

Parent-wise, proud of the ill-favoured babe.

Not long! A great hand, careful lest it

crush,

Startled him on the shoulder: up he stared,

And over him, who stood but Herakles!

There smiled the mighty presence, all one
smile

And no touch more of the world-weary
God,

Through the brief respite. Just a gar-
land's grace

About the brow, a song to satisfy

Head, heart and breast, and trumpet-lips
at once,

A solemn draught of true religious wine, 90

And, — how should I know? — half a
mountain goat

Torn up and swallowed down, — the feast
was fierce

But brief: all cares and pains took wing
and flew,
Leaving the hero ready to begin
And help mankind, whatever woe came
next,
Even though what came next should be
nought more

Than the mean querulous mouth o' the
man, remarked

Pursing its grievance up till patience failed
And the sage needs must rush out, as we
saw

To sulk outside and pet his hate in peace.
By no means would the Helper have it so;

10 He who was just about to handle brutes
In Thrace, and bit the jaws which breathed
the flame, —

Well, if a good laugh and a jovial word
Could bridle age which blew bad humours
forth,

That were a kind of help, too!

"Thou, there!" hailed
This grand benevolence the ungracious
one —

"Why look'st so solemn and so thought-
absorbed?

To guests a servant should not sour-faced be,
But do the honours with a mind urbane.

While thou, contrariwise, beholding here

20 Arrive thy master's comrade, hast for him
A churlish visage, all one beetle-brow —

Having regard to grief that's out-of-door!
Come hither, and so get to grow more wise!
Things mortal — know'st the nature that
they have?

No, I imagine! whence could knowledge
spring?

Give ear to me, then! For all flesh to die,
Is nature's due; nor is there any one
Of mortals with assurance he shall last
The coming morrow: for, what's born of
chance

30 Invisibly proceeds the way it will,
Not to be learned, no fortune-teller's prize.

This, therefore, having heard and known
through me,

Gladden thyself! Drink! Count the
day-by-day

Existence thine, and all the other — chance!
Ay, and pay homage also to by far

The sweetest of divinities for man,
Kupris!¹ Benignant Goddess will she
prove!

But as for aught else, leave and let things
be!

And trust my counsel, if I seem to speak
To purpose — as I do, apparently.

30 Wilt not thou, then, — discarding over-
much

Mournfulness, do away with this shut door,
Come drink along with me, be-garlanded

This fashion? Do so, and — I well know
what —

¹ The Cyprian Venus.

From this stern mood, this shrunk-up state
of mind,

The pit-pat fall o' the flagon-juice down
throat

Soon will dislodge thee from bad har-
bourage!

Men being mortal should think mortal-
like:

Since to your solemn, brow-contracting
sort,

All of them, — so I lay down law at least, — 50
Life is not truly life but misery."

Whereto the man with softened surliness:
"We know as much: but dealt with matters,

now,
Hardly befitting mirth and revelry."

"No intimate, this woman that is dead:
Mourn not too much! For, those o' the

house itself,
Thy masters live, remember!"

"Live indeed?

Ah, thou know'st nought o' the woe within
these walls!"

"I do — unless thy master spoke me false
Somehow!" 60

"Ay, ay, too much he loves a guest,
Too much, that master mine!" so mut-
tered he.

"Was it improper he should treat me well,
Because an alien corpse was in the way?"

"No alien, but most intimate indeed!"

"Can it be, some woe was, he told me
not?"

"Farewell and go thy way! Thy cares
for thee —

To us, our master's sorrow is a care."

"This word begins no tale of alien woe!"

"Had it been other woe than intimate,
I could have seen thee feast, nor felt amiss." 70

"What! have I suffered strangely from
my host?"

"Thou cam'st not at a fit reception-time:
With sorrow here beforehand: and thou

seest
Shorn hair, black robes."

"But who is it that's dead?
Some child gone? or the aged sire per-
haps?"

"Admetos' wife, then! she has perished,
guest!"

"How sayest? And did ye house me, all
the same?"

"Ay: for he had thee in that reverence
He dared not turn thee from his door
away!"

"O hapless, and bereft of what a mate!"

"All of us now are dead, not she alone!"

"But I divined it! seeing, as I did,
His eye that ran with tears, his close-clipt
hair,
His countenance! Though he persuaded
me,
Saying it was a stranger's funeral
He went with to the grave: against my
wish,

10 He forced on me that I should enter doors,
Drink in the hall o' the hospitable man
Circumstanced so! And do I revel yet
With wreath on head? But — thou to
hold thy peace

Nor tell me what a woe oppressed my
friend!

Where is he gone to bury her? Where
am I

To go and find her?"

"By the road that leads
Straight to Larissa, thou wilt see the tomb,
Out of the suburb, a carved sepulchre."

So said he, and therewith dismissed him-
self

20 Inside to his lamenting: somewhat
soothed,

However, that he had adroitly spoilt
The mirth of the great creature: oh, he
marked

The movement of the mouth, how lip
pressed lip,

And either eye forgot to shine, as, fast,
He plucked the chaplet from his forehead,
dashed

The myrtle-sprays down, trod them under-
foot!

And all the joy and wonder of the wine
Withered away, like fire from off a brand
The wind blows over — beacon though it
be,

30 Whose merry ardour only meant to make
Somebody all the better for its blaze,
And save lost people in the dark: quenched
now!

Not long quenched! As the flame, just
hurried off

The brand's edge, suddenly renews its bite,
Tasting some richness caked i' the core o'
the tree, —

Pine, with a blood that's oil, — and
triumphs up

Pillar-wise to the sky and saves the world:
So, in a spasm and splendour of resolve,
All at once did the God surmount the
man.

"O much-enduring heart and hand of 44
mine!

Now show what sort of son she bore to
Zeus,

That daughter of Elektruon, Tiruns'
child,

Alkmené! for that son must needs save
now

The just-dead lady: ay, establish here
I' the house again Alkestis, bring about
Comfort and succour to Admetos so!
I will go lie in wait for Death, black-stoled
King of the corpses! I shall find him,
sure,

Drinking, beside the tomb, o' the sacrifice:
And if I lie in ambuscade, and leap 50

Out of my lair, and seize — encircle him
Till one hand join the other round about —
There lives not who shall pull him out from
me,

Rib-mauled, before he let the woman go!
But even say I miss the booty, — say,
Death comes not to the bolted blood, —
why then,

Down go I, to the unsunned dwelling-place
Of Koré and the king there, — make
demand,

Confident I shall bring Alkestis back,
So as to put her in the hands of him 60
My host, that housed me, never drove me
off:

Though stricken with sore sorrow, hid the
stroke,

Being a noble heart and honouring me!
Who of Thessalians, more than this man,
loves

The stranger? Who, that now inhabits
Greece?

Wherefore he shall not say the man was
vile

Whom he befriended, — native noble
heart!"

So, one look upward, as if Zeus might laugh
Approval of his human progeny, —

One summons of the whole magnificent frame, 70
Each sinew to its service, — up he caught,
And over shoulder cast, the lion-shag,
Let the club go, — for had he not those
hands?

And so went striding off, on that straight
way

Leads to Larissa and the suburb tomb.
Gladness be with thee, Helper of our
world!

I think this is the authentic sign and seal
Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
And more glad, until gladness blossoms,
busts

Into a rage to suffer for mankind, 80
And recommence at sorrow: drops like seed
After the blossom, ultimate of all.
Say, does the seed scorn earth and seek
the sun?

Surely it has no other end and aim
Than to drop, once more die into the
ground,
Taste cold and darkness and oblivion
there:
And thence rise, tree-like grow through
pain to joy,
More joy and most joy, — do man good
again.

So, to the struggle off strode Herakles.
When silence closed behind the lion-garh,
Back came our dull fact settling in its place,
Though heartiness and passion half-dis-
persed

10 The inevitable fate. And presently
In came the mourners from the funeral,
One after one, until we hoped the last
Would be Alkestis and so end our dream.
Could they have really left Alkestis lone
I' the wayside sepulchre! Home, all save
she!

And when Admetos felt that it was so,
By the stand-still: when he lifted head
and face

From the two hiding hands and peplos'
fold,

And looked forth, knew the palace, knew
the hills,

20 Knew the plains, knew the friendly fre-
quence there,

And no Alkestis any more again,
Why, the whole woe billow-like broke on
him.

"O hateful entry, hateful countenance
O' the widowed halls!" — he moaned.

"What was to be?

Go there? Stay here? Speak, not speak?
All was now

Mad and impossible alike; one way
And only one was sane and safe — to die:

Now he was made aware how dear is death,
How loveable the dead are, how the heart

30 Yearns in us to go hide where they repose,
When we find sunbeams do no good to
see,

Nor earth rests rightly where our footsteps
fall.

His wife had been to him the very pledge,
Sun should be sun, earth — earth; the
pledge was robbed,

Pact broken, and the world was left no
world."

He stared at the impossible mad life:
Stood, while they urged "Advance — ad-
vance! Go deep

Into the utter dark, thy palace-core!"
They tried what they called comfort,

"touched the quick
40 Of the ulceration in his soul," he said,

With memories, — "once thy joy was thus
and thus!"
True comfort were to let him fling himself

Into the hollow grave o' the tomb, and so
Let him lie dead along with all he loved.

One bade him note that his own family
Boasted a certain father whose sole son,
Worthy bewailment, died: and yet the sire
Bore stoutly up against the blow and lived;
For all that he was childless now, and
prone

Already to grey hairs, far on in life. 50
Could such a good example miss effect?

Why fix foot, stand so, staring at the house,
Why not go in, as that wise kinsman would?

"O that arrangement of the house I know!
How can I enter, how inhabit thee

Now that one cast of fortune changes all?
Oh me, for much divides the then from
now!

Then — with those pine-tree torches,
Pelian pomp

And marriage-hymns, I entered, holding
high

The hand of my dear wife; while many- 60
voiced

The revelry that followed me and her
That's dead now, — friends felicitating
both,

As who were lofty-lineaged, each of us
Born of the best, two wedded and made
one;

Now — wail is wedding-chant's antagonist,
And, for white peplos, stoles in sable state

Herald my way to the deserted couch!"

The one word more they ventured was
"This grief

Befell thee witless of what sorrow means,
Close after prosperous fortune: but, reflect! 70
Thou hast saved soul and body. Dead,

thy wife —
Living, the love she left. What's novel
here?

Many the man, from whom Death long ago
Loosed the life-partner!"

Then Admetos spoke:
Turned on the comfort, with no tears, this
time.

He was beginning to be like his wife.
I told you of that pressure to the point,
Word slow pursuing word in monotone,

Alkestis spoke with; so Admetos, now,
Solemnly bore the burden of the truth. 80
And as the voice of him grew, gathered

strength,
And groaned on, and persisted to the end,
We felt how deep had been descent in grief,

And with what change he came up now to
light,

And left behind such littleness as tears.

"Friends, I account the fortune of my wife
Happier than mine, though it seem other-
wise:

For, her indeed no grief will ever touch,
And she from many a labour pauses now,
Renowned one! Whereas I, who ought
not live,

But do live, by evading destiny,
Sad life am I to lead, I learn at last!
For how shall I bear going in-doors here?
Accosting whom? By whom saluted back,
Shall I have joyous entry? Whither turn?
Inside, the solitude will drive me forth,
10 When I behold the empty bed — my
wife's —

The seat she used to sit upon, the floor
Unsprinkled as when dwellers loved the
cool,

The children that will clasp my knees
about,
Cry for their mother back: these servants
too

Moaning for what a guardian they have
lost!

Inside my house such circumstance awaits.
Outside, — Thessalian people's marriage-
feasts

And gatherings for talk will harass me,
With overflow of women everywhere;

20 It is impossible I look on them —
Familiars of my wife and just her age!
And then, whoever is a foe of mine,
And lights on me — why, this will be his
word —

'See there! alive ignobly, there he skulks
That played the dastard when it came to
die,

And, giving her he wedded, in exchange,
Kept himself out of Hades safe and sound,
The coward! Do you call that creature —
man?

30 He hates his parents for declining death,
Just as if he himself would gladly die!"
This sort of reputation shall I have,
Beside the other ills enough in store.
Ill-famed, ill-faring, — what advantage,
friends,

Do you perceive I gain by life for death?"

That was the truth. Vexed waters sank
to smooth:

'Twas only when the last of bubbles broke,
The latest circlet widened all away
And left a placid level, that up swam
To the surface the drowned truth, in
dreadful change.

40 So, through the quiet and submission, —
ay,
Spite of some strong words — (for you miss
the tone)

The grief was getting to be infinite —
Grief, friends fell back before. Their
office shrank

To that old solace of humanity —
"Being born mortal, bear grief! Why
born else?"

And they could only meditate anew.

"They, too, upborne by airy help of song,
And haply science, which can find the stars,
Had searched the heights: had sounded
depths as well

By catching much at books where logic 50
lurked,

Yet nowhere found they aught could over-
come

Necessity: not any medicine served,
Which Thracian tablets treasure, Orphic
voice

Wrote itself down upon: nor remedy
Which Phoibos gave to the Asklepiadai;
Cutting the roots of many a virtuous
herb

To solace overburdened mortals. None!
Of this sole goddess, never may we go

To altar nor to image: sacrifice

She hears not. All to pray for is — 'Ap- 60
proach!

But, oh, no harder on me, awful one,
Than heretofore! Let life endure thee
still!

For, whatsoe'er Zeus' nod decree, that
same

In concert with thee hath accomplishment.

Iron, the very stuff o' the Chaluboi,

Thou, by sheer strength, dost conquer and
subdue;

Nor, of that harsh abrupt resolve of thine,
Any relenting is there!"

"O my king!

Thee also, in the shackles of those hands,
Not to be shunned, the Goddess grasped! 70

Yet, bear!

Since never wilt thou lead from under-
ground

The dead ones, wail thy worst! If mortals
die, —

The very children of immortals, too,
Dropped 'mid our darkness, these decay as
sure!

Dear indeed was she while among us: dear,
Now she is dead, must she for ever be:

Thy portion was to clasp, within thy couch,
The noblest of all women as a wife.

Nor be the tomb of her supposed some
heap

That hides mortality: but like the Gods & 80
Honoured, a veneration to a world

Of wanderers! Oft the wanderer, struck
thereby,

Who else had sailed past in his merchant-
ship,

Ay, he shall leave ship, land, long wind his
way

Up to the mountain-summit, till there
break

Speech forth 'So, this was she, then, died
of old

To save her husband! now, a deity
She bends above us. Hail, benignant one!

Give good!' Such voices so will suppli-
cate.

"But — can it be? Alkmené's offspring
comes,
Admetos! — to thy house advances here!"

I doubt not, they supposed him decently
Dead somewhere in that winter world of
Thrace —

Vanquished by one o' the Bistones, or else
Victim to some mad steed's voracity —
For did not friends prognosticate as much?
It were a new example to the point,
That "children of immortals, dropped by
stealth

10 Into our darkness, die as sure as we!"

A case to quote and comfort people with:
But, as for lamentation, ai and pheu,
Right-minded subjects kept them for their
lord.

Ay, he it was advancing! In he strode,
And took his stand before Admetos, —
turned

Now by despair to such a quietude,
He neither raised his face nor spoke, this
time,

The while his friend surveyed him steadily.
That friend looked rough with fighting:
had he strained

20 Worst brute to breast was ever strangled
yet?

Somehow, a victory — for there stood the
strength,

Happy, as always; something grave, per-
haps;

The great vein-cordage on the fret-worked
front,

Black-swollen, beaded yet with battle-dew
The yellow hair o' the hero! — his big
frame

A-quiver with each muscle sinking back
Into the sleepy smooth it leaped from late.
Under the great guard of one arm, there
leant

A shrouded something, live and woman-
like,

30 Propped by the heart-beats 'neath the
lion-coat.

When he had finished his survey, it seemed,
The heavings of the heart began subside,
The helpful breath returned, and last the
smile

Shone out, all Herakles was back again,
As the words followed the saluting hand.

"To friendly man, behoves we freely speak,
Admetos! — nor keep buried, deep in
breast,

Blame we leave silent. I assuredly
Judged myself proper, if I should approach
By accident calamities of thine,

40 To be démonstrably thy friend: but
thou

Told'st me not of the corpse then claiming
care,

That was thy wife's, but didst install me
guest

I' the house here, as though busied with
a grief

Indeed, but then, mere grief beyond thy
gate:

And so, I crowned my head, and to the Gods
Poured my libations in thy dwelling-place,
With such misfortune round me. And I
blame —

Certainly blame thee, having suffered thus!
But still I would not pain thee, pained 50

enough:

So let it pass! Wherefore I seek thee now,
Having turned back again though onward
bound,

That I will tell thee. Take and keep for
me

This woman, till I come thy way again,
Driving before me, having killed the king
O' the Bistones, that drove of Thrakian
steeds:

In such case, give the woman back to me!
But should I fare, — as fare I fain would
not,

Seeing I hope to prosper and return, —
Then, I bequeath her as thy household 60
slave.

She came into my hands with good hard
toil!

For, what find I, when started on my
course,

But certain people, a whole country-side,
Holding a wrestling-bout? as good to me
As a new labour: whence I took, and here
Come keeping with me, this, the victor's
prize.

For, such as conquered in the easy work,
Gained horses which they drove away: and
such

As conquered in the harder, — those who
boxed

And wrestled, — cattle; and, to crown the 70
prize,

A woman followed. Chancing as I did,
Base were it to forego this fame and gain!
Well, as I said, I trust her to thy care:

No woman I have kidnapped, understand!
But good hard toil has done it: here I
come!

Some day, who knows? even thou wilt
praise the feat!"

Admetos raised his face and eyed the pair:
Then, hollowly and with submission, spoke,

And spoke again, and spoke time after time,
When he perceived the silence of his friend 80

Would not be broken by consenting word.
As a tired slave goes adding stone to stone

Until he stop some current that molests,
So poor Admetos piled up argument

Vainly against the purpose all too plain
In that great brow acquainted with com-
mand.

"Nowise dishonouring, nor amid my foes
Ranking thee, did I hide my wife's ill fate;
But it were grief superimposed on grief,
Shouldst thou have hastened to another
home.

My own woe was enough for me to weep!
But, for this woman, — if it so may be, —
Bid some Thessalian, — I entreat thee,
king! —

Keep her, — who has not suffered like
myself!

Many of the Pheraioi welcome thee.
Be no reminder to me of my ills!

10 I could not, if I saw her come to live,
Restrain the tear! Inflict on me diseased
No new disease: woe bends me down
enough

Then, where could she be sheltered in my
house,

Female and young too? For that she is
young,

The vesture and adornment prove. Re-
flect!

Should such an one inhabit the same roof
With men? And how, mixed up, a girl,
with youths,

Shall she keep pure, in that case? No
light task

To curb the May-day youngster, Herakles!
20 I only speak because of care for thee.

Or must I, in avoidance of such harm,
Make her to enter, lead her life within
The chamber of the dead one, all apart?

How shall I introduce this other, couch
This where Alkestis lay? A double blame
I apprehend: first, from the citizens —
Lest some tongue of them taunt that I
betray

My benefactress, fall into the snare
Of a new fresh face: then, the dead one's
self, —

30 Will she not blame me likewise? Worthy,
sure,

Of worship from me! circumspect my
ways,

And jealous of a fault, are bound to be.
But thou, — O woman, whosoe'er thou
art, —

Know, thou hast all the form, art like as
like

Alkestis, in the bodily shape! Ah me!
Take, — by the Gods, — this woman from
my sight,

Lest thou undo me, the undone before!
Since I seem — seeing her — as if I saw
My own wife! And confusions cloud my
heart,

40 And from my eyes the springs break forth!
Ah me

Unhappy — how I taste for the first time
My misery in all its bitterness!"

Whereat the friends conferred: "The
chance, in truth,

Was an untoward one — none said other-
wise.

Still, what a God comes giving, good or bad,
That, one should take and bear with.
Take her, then!"

Herakles, — not unfastening his hold
On that same misery, beyond mistake
Hoarse in the words, convulsive in the
face, —

"I would that I had such a power," said he, 5
"As to lead up into the light again
Thy very wife, and grant thee such a grace."

"Well do I know thou wouldst: but where
the hope?

There is no bringing back the dead to
light."

"Be not extravagant in grief, no less!
Bear it, by augury of better things!"

"'Tis easier to advise 'bear up, than bear!'"

"But how carve way i' the life that lies
before,
If bent on groaning ever for the past?"

"I myself know that: but a certain love 6
Allures me to the choice I shall not change."

"Ay, but, still loving dead ones, still makes
weep."

"And let it be so! She has ruined me,
And still more than I say: that answers all."

"Oh thou hast lost a brave wife: who
disputes?"

"So brave a one — that he whom thou
behold'st
Will never more enjoy his life again!"

"Time will assuage! The evil yet is young!"

"Time, thou mayst say, will; if time mean
— to die."

"A wife — the longing for new marriage- 7
joys
Will stop thy sorrow!"

"Hush, friend, — hold thy peace!
What hast thou said! I could not credit
ear!"

"How then? Thou wilt not marry, then,
but keep
A widowed couch?"

"There is not anyone
Of womankind shall couch with whom
thou seest!"

"Dost think to profit thus in any way

The dead one?"

"Her, wherever she abide,
My duty is to honour."

"And I praise —
Indeed I praise thee! Still, thou hast to
pay
The price of it, in being held a fool!"

"Fool call me — only one name call me not!
Bridegroom!"

"No, it was praise, I portioned thee,
Of being good true husband to thy wife!"

"When I betray her, though she is no
more,
May I die!"

And the thing he said was true:
For out of Herakles a great glow broke.
There stood a victor worthy of a prize:
The violet-crown that withers on the brow
Of the half-hearted claimant. Oh, he
knew

The signs of battle hard fought and well
won,

This queller of the monsters! — knew
his friend

Planted firm foot, now, on the loathly
thing

That was Admetos late! "would die," he
knew,

Ere let the reptile raise its crest again.
If that was truth, why try the true friend
more?

"Then, since thou canst be faithful to the
death,
Take, deep into thy house, my dame!"
smiled he.

"Not so! — I pray, by thy Progenitor!"

"Thou wilt mistake in disobeying me!"

"Obeying thee, I have to break my heart!"

"Obey me! Who knows but the favour
done
May fall into its place as duty too?"

So, he was humble, would decline no more
Bearing a burden: he just sighed "Alas!
Wouldst thou hadst never brought this
prize from game!"

"Yet, when I conquered there, thou con-
queredst!"

"All excellently urged! Yet — spite of all,
Bear with me! let the woman go away!"

"She shall go, if needs must: but ere she go,
See if there is need!"

"Need there is! At least,
Except I make thee angry with me, so!"

"But I persist, because I have my spice
Of intuition likewise: take the dame!"

"Be thou the victor, then! But certainly
Thou dost thy friend no pleasure in the
act!"

"Oh, time will come when thou shalt praise 40
me! Now —
Only obey!"

"Then servants, since my house
Must needs receive this woman, take her
there!"

"I shall not trust this woman to the care
Of servants."

"Why, conduct her in, thyself,
If that seem preferable!"

"I prefer,
"With thy good leave, to place her in thy
hands!"

"I would not touch her! Entry to the
house —

That, I concede thee."

"To thy sole right hand,
I mean to trust her!"

"King! Thou wrenchest this
Out of me by main force, if I submit!" 50

"Courage, friend! Come, stretch hand
forth! Good! Now touch
The stranger-woman!"

"There! A hand I stretch —
As though it meant to cut off Gorgon's
head!"

"Hast hold of her?"

"Fast hold."

"Why, then, hold fast
And have her! and, one day, asseverate
Thou wilt, I think, thy friend, the son of
Zeus

He was the gentle guest to entertain!
Look at her! See if she, in any way,
Present thee with resemblance of thy wife!"

Ah, but the tears come, find the words at 60
fault!

There is no telling how the hero twitched
The veil off: and there stood, with such
fixed eyes

And such slow smile, Alkestis' silent self!
It was the crowning grace of that great
heart,

To keep back joy: procrastinate the truth
Until the wife, who had made proof and
found

The husband wanting, might essay once
more,

Hear, see, and feel him renovated now —
Able to do, now, all herself had done,

Risen to the height of her: so, hand in 70
hand,

The two might go together, live and die.

Beside, when he found speech, you guess the speech.

He could not think he saw his wife again: It was some mocking God that used the bliss

To make him mad! Till Herakles must help:

Assure him that no spectre mocked at all; He was embracing whom he buried once. Still, — did he touch, might he address the true,

True eye, true body of the true live wife?

to And Herakles said, smiling, "All was truth.

Spectre? Admetos had not made his guest

One who played ghost-invoker, or such cheat!

Oh, he might speak and have response, in time!

All heart could wish was gained now — life for death:

Only, the rapture must not grow immense: Take care, nor wake the envy of the Gods!"

"Oh thou, of greatest Zeus true son," — so spoke

Admetos when the closing word must come,

"Go ever in a glory of success,

20 And save, that sire, his offspring to the end! For thou hast — only thou — raised me and mine

Up again to this light and life!" Then asked

Tremblingly, how was trod the perilous path

Out of the dark into the light and life: How it had happened with Alkestis there.

And Herakles said little, but enough — How he engaged in combat with that king

O' the demons: how the field of contest lay

By the tomb's self: how he sprang from ambushade,

30 Captured Death, caught him in that pair of hands.

But all the time, Alkestis moved not once Out of the set gaze and the silent smile;

And a cold fear ran through Admetos' frame:

"Why does she stand and front me, silent thus?"

Herakles solemnly replied "Not yet Is it allowable thou hear the things

She has to tell thee; let vanish quite That consecration to the lower Gods,

And on our upper world the third day rise!

Lead her in, meanwhile; good and true thou art,

Good, true, remain thou! Practise piety To stranger-guests the old way! So, farewell!

Since forth I fare, fulfil my urgent task Set by the king, the son of Sthenelos."

Fain would Admetos keep that splendid smile

Ever to light him. "Stay with us, thou heart!

Remain our house-friend!"

"At some other day! Now, of necessity, I haste!" smiled he.

"But mayst thou prosper, go forth on a foot

Sure to return! Through all the tetrarchy 50 Command my subjects that they institute

Thanksgiving dances for the glad event, And bid each altar smoke with sacrifice!

For we are minded to begin a fresh Existence, better than the life before;

Seeing I own myself supremely blest."

Whereupon all the friendly moralists Drew this conclusion: chirped, each beard to each:

"Manifold are thy shapings, Providence! Many a hopeless matter Gods arrange. 60

What we expected never came to pass: What we did not expect, Gods brought to

bear: So have things gone, this whole experience through!"

Ah, but if you had seen the play itself! They say, my poet failed to get the prize:

Sophokles got the prize, — great name! They say,

Sophokles also means to make a piece, Model a new Admetos, a new wife:

Success to him! One thing has many sides.

The great name! But no good supplants 70 a good,

Nor beauty undoes beauty. Sophokles Will carve and carry a fresh cup, brimful

Of beauty and good, firm to the altar-foot, And glorify the Dionysiac shrine:

Not clash against this crater in the place Where the God put it when his mouth had

drained, To the last dregs, libation life-blood-like,

And praised Euripides for evermore — The Human with his droppings of warm

tears.

Still, since one thing may have so many 80 sides,

I think I see how, — far from Sophokles, —

You, I, or anyone might mould a new
Admetos, new Alkestis. Ah, that brave
Bounty of poets, the one royal race
That ever was, or will be, in this world!
They give no gift that bounds itself and
ends

I' the giving and the taking: theirs so
breeds

I' the heart and soul o' the taker, so trans-
mutes

The man who only was a man before,
That he grows godlike in his turn, can
give —

10 He also: share the poets' privilege,
Bring forth new good, new beauty, from
the old.

As though the cup that gave the wine, gave,
too,

The God's prolific giver of the grape,
That vine, was wont to find out, fawn
around

His footstep, springing still to bless the
dearth,

At bidding of a Mainad.¹ So with me:
For I have drunk this poem, quenched my
thirst,

Satisfied heart and soul — yet more re-
mains!

20 Could we too make a poem? Try at least,
Inside the head, what shape the rose-mists
take!

When God Apollon took, for punishment,
A mortal form and sold himself a slave
To King Admetos till a term should end, —
Not only did he make, in servitude,
Such music, while he fed the flocks and
herds,

As saved the pasturage from wrong or
fright,

Curing rough creatures of ungentleness:
Much more did that melodious wisdom
work

Within the heart o' the master: there, ran
wild

30 Many a lust and greed that grow to strength
By preying on the native pity and care,
Would else, all undisturbed, possess the
land.

And these, the God so tamed, with golden
tongue,

That, in the plenitude of youth and power,
Admetos vowed himself to rule thence-
forth

In Pherai solely for his people's sake,
Subduing to such end each lust and greed
That dominates the natural charity.

And so the struggle ended. Right ruled
might:

40 And soft yet brave, and good yet wise, the
man

¹ Dionysian priestess.

Stood up to be a monarch; having learned
The worth of life, life's worth would he
bestow

On all whose lot was cast, to live or die,
As he determined for the multitude.

So stands a statue: pedestalled sublime,
Only that it may wave the thunder off,

And ward, from winds that vex, a world
below.

And then, — as if a whisper found its way
E'en to the sense o' the marble, — "Vain
thy vow!

The royalty of its resolve, that head 50
Shall hide within the dust ere day be done:

That arm, its outstretch of beneficence,
Shall have a speedy ending on the earth:

Lie patient, prone, while light some
cricket leaps

And takes possession of the masterpiece,
To sit, sing louder as more near the sun.

For why? A flaw was in the pedestal;
Who knows? A worm's work! Sapped,

the certain fate
O' the statue is to fall, and thine to die!"

Whereat the monarch, calm, addressed 60
himself

To die, but bitterly the soul outbroke —
"O prodigality of life, blind waste

I' the world, of power profuse without the
will

To make life do its work, deserve its day!
My ancestors pursued their pleasure,

poured
The blood o' the people out in idle war,
Or took occasion of some weary peace

To bid men dig down deep or build up high,
Spend bone and marrow that the king

might feast
Entrenched and buttressed from the vulgar 70
gaze.

Yet they all lived, nay, lingered to old age:
As though Zeus loved that they should

laugh to scorn
The vanity of seeking other ends

In rule than just the ruler's pastime. They
Lived; I must die."

And, as some long last moan
Of a minor suddenly is propped beneath

By note which, new-struck, turns the wail,
that was,

Into a wonder and a triumph, so
Began Alkestis: "Nay, thou art to live!

The glory that, in the disguise of flesh, 80
Was helpful to our house, — he prophesied

The coming fate: whereon, I pleaded sore
That he, — I guessed a God, who to his

couch
Amid the clouds must go and come again,

While we were darkling, — since he loved
us both,

He should permit thee, at whatever price,
To live and carry out to heart's content

Soul's purpose, 'turn each thought to very deed.

Nor let Zeus lose the monarch meant in thee."

"To which Apollon, with a sunset smile,
Sadly — 'And so should mortals arbitrate!
It were unseemly if they aped us Gods,
And, mindful of our chain of consequence,
Lost care of the immediate earthly link:
Forwent the comfort of life's little hour,
In prospect of some cold abysmal blank
10 Alien eternity, — unlike the time
They know, and understand to practise
with, —

No, — our eternity — no heart's blood,
bright
And warm outpoured in its behoof, would
tinge

Never so palely, warm a whit the more:
Whereas retained and treasured — left to
beat

Joyously on, a life's length, in the breast
O' the loved and loving — it would throb
itself

Through, and suffuse the earthly tenement,
Transform it, even 'as your mansion here
20 Is love-transformed into a temple-home
Where I, a God, forget the Olympian glow,
I' the feel of human richness like the rose:
Your hopes and fears, so blind and yet so
sweet

With death about them. Therefore, well
in thee

To look, not on eternity, but time:

To apprehend that, should Admetos die,
All, we Gods purposed in him, dies as
sure,

That, life's link snapping, all our chain is
lost.

And yet a mortal glance might pierce,
methinks,

30 Deeper into the seeming dark of things,
And learn, no fruit, man's life can bear,
will fade:

Learn, if Admetos die now, so much more
Will pity for the frailness found in flesh,
Will terror at the earthly chance and change
Frustrating wisest scheme of noblest soul,
Will these go wake the seeds of good asleep
Throughout the world: as oit a rough
wind sheds

The unripe promise of some field-flower, —
true!

But loosens to the level, and lets breathe
40 A thousand captives for the year to come.
Nevertheless, obtain thy prayer, stay fate!
Admetos lives — if thou wilt die for him!"

"So was the pact concluded that I die,
And thou live on, live for thyself, for me,
For all the world. Embrace and bid me
hail,
Husband, because I have the victory —

Am, heart, soul, head to foot, one happiness!"

Whereto Admetos, in a passionate cry,
"Never, by that true word Apollon spoke!
All the unwise wish is unwished, oh wife! 54
Let purposes of Zeus fulfil themselves,
If not through me, then through some
other man!

Still, in myself he had a purpose too,
Inalienably mine, to end with me:
This purpose — that, throughout my
earthly life,

Mine should be mingled and made up with
thine, —

And we two prove one force and play one
part

And do one thing. Since death divides
the pair,

'Tis well that I depart and thou remain
Who wast to me as spirit is to flesh: 60

Let the flesh perish, be perceived no more,
So thou, the spirit that informed the flesh,

Bend yet awhile, a very flame above
The rift I drop into the darkness by, —

And bid remember, flesh and spirit once
Worked in the world, one body, for man's
sake.

Never be that abominable show
Of passive death without a quickening
life —

Admetos only, no Alkestis now!"

Then she: "O thou Admetos, must the 70
pile

Of truth on truth, which needs but one
truth more

To tower up in completeness, trophy-like,
Emprize of man, and triumph of the world,

Must it go ever to the ground again
Because of some faint heart or faltering
hand,

Which we, that breathless world about the
base,

Trusted should carry safe to altitude,
Superimpose o' the summit, our supreme

Achievement, our victorious coping-stone?
Shall thine, Beloved, prove the hand and 80
heart

That fail again, flinch backward at the
truth

Would cap and crown the structure this
last time, —

Precipitate our monumental hope
And strew the earth ignobly yet once more?

See how, truth piled on truth, the structure
wants,

Waits just the crowning truth I claim of
thee!

Wouldst thou, for any joy to be enjoyed,
For any sorrow that thou mightst escape,

Unwill thy will to reign a righteous king?
Nowise! And were there two lots, death 90
and life, —

Life, wherein good resolve should go to an,
 Death, whereby finest fancy grew plain fact
 'T' the reign of thy survivor, — life or death?
 Certainly death, thou choosest. Here
 stand I

The wedded, the beloved one: hadst thou
 loved

Her who less worthily could estimate
 Both life and death than thou? Not so
 should say

Admetos, whom Apollon made come court
 Alkestis in a car, submissive brutes

Of blood were yoked to, symbolising soul
 Must dominate unruly sense in man.

Then, shall Admetos and Alkestis see
 Good alike, and alike choose, each for each,
 Good, — and yet, each for other, at the last
 Choose evil? What? thou soundest in
 my soul

To depths below the deepest, reachest good
 In evil, that makes evil good again,

And so allottest to me that I live
 And not die — letting die, not thee alone,

But all true life that lived in both of us?
 Look at me once ere thou decree the lot!"

Therewith her whole soul entered into
 his,

He looked the look back, and Alkestis died.

And even while it lay, i' the look of him,
 Dead, the dimmed body, bright Alkestis'
 soul

Had penetrated through the populace
 Of ghosts, was got to Koré, — throned
 and crowned

The pensive queen o' the twilight, where
 she dwells

Forever in a muse, but half away
 From flowery earth she lost and hankers
 for, —

And there demanded to become a ghost
 Before the time.

Whereat the softened eyes
 Of the lost maidenhood that lingered still
 Straying among the flowers in Sicily,
 Sudden was startled back to Hades' throne
 By that demand: broke through humanity
 Into the orb'd omniscience of a God,
 Searched at a glance Alkestis to the soul,
 And said — while a long slow sigh lost it-
 self

I' the hard and hollow passage of a laugh:

"Hence, thou deceiver! This is not to die,
 If, by the very death which mocks me now,
 The life, that's left behind and past my
 power,

Is formidably doubled. Say, there fight
 Two athletes, side by side, each athlete
 armed

With only half the weapons, and no more,
 Adequate to a contest with their foe:

If one of these should fling helm, sword
 and shield

To fellow — shieldless, swordless, helm-
 less, late —

And so leaped naked o'er the barrier, 50
 leave

A combatant equipped from head to
 heel,

Yet cry to the other side 'Receive a friend
 Who fights no longer!' 'Back, friend, to
 the fray!'

Would be the prompt rebuff; I echo it.

Two souls in one were formidable
 odds:

Admetos must not be himself and thou!"

And so, before the embrace relaxed a
 whit,

The lost eyes opened, still beneath the
 look;

And lo, Alkestis was alive again,
 And of Admetos' rapture who shall speak? 60

So, the two lived together long and
 well.

But never could I learn, by word of scribe
 Or voice of poet, rumour wafts our
 way,

That — of the scheme of rule in righteous-
 ness,

The bringing back again the Golden
 Age,

Which, rather than renounce, our pair
 would die

That ever one faint particle came true,
 With both alive to bring it to effect:

Such is the envy Gods still bear mankind!

So might our version of the story prove, 70
 And no Euripidean pathos plague

Too much my critic-friend of Syracuse.

"Besides your poem failed to get the prize:
 (That is, the first prize: second prize is
 none).

Sophokles got it!" Honour the great
 name!

All cannot love two great names; yet some
 do:

I know the poetess who graved in gold,
 Among her glories that shall never fade,

This style and title for Euripides,
The Human with his droppings of warm 80

tears.

I know, too, a great Kaunian painter,¹
 strong

As Herakles, though rosy with a robe
 Of grace that softens down the sinewy
 strength:

And he has made a picture of it all.

There lies Alkestis dead, beneath the sun,

¹ The famous Protogenes, the rival of Apelles.

She longed to look her last upon, beside
 The sea, which somehow tempts the life
 in us
 To come trip over its white waste of
 waves,
 And try escape from earth, and fleet as
 free.
 Behind the body, I suppose there bends
 Old Pheres in his hoary impotence;
 And women-wailers, in a corner crouch
 — Four, beautiful as you four — yes,
 indeed! —
 Close, each to other, agonising all,
 10 As fastened, in fear's rhythmic sympathy,
 To two contending opposite. There strains
 The might o' the hero 'gainst his more
 than match,
 — Death, dreadful not in thew and bone,
 but like
 The envenomed substance that exudes
 some dew
 Whereby the merely honest flesh and
 blood

Will fester up and run to ruin straight,
 Ere they can close with, clasp and over-
 come
 The poisonous impalpability
 That simulates a form beneath the flow
 Of those grey garments; I pronounce 20
 that piece
 Worthy to set up in our Poikilé!

 And all came, — glory of the golden
 verse,
 And passion of the picture, and that fine
 Frank outgush of the human gratitude
 Which saved our ship and me, in Syra-
 cusc, —
 Ay, and the tear or two which slipt per-
 haps
 Away from you, friends, while I told my
 tale,
 — It all came of this play that gained no
 prize!
 Why crown whom Zeus has crowned in
 soul before?

ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY;

INCLUDING A TRANSCRIPT FROM EURIPIDES: BEING

THE LAST ADVENTURE OF BALAUSTION.

1875.

[Is a defence of Comedy as understood and practised by Aristophanes; that is, as a broad expression of the natural life and a satire upon those who condemn it. See Mrs. Orr's Handbook.]

PERSONS IN THE TRAN- SCRIBED PLAY OF "HERAKLES."

AMPHITRUON.
MEGARA.
LUKOS.
HERAKLES.
IRIS.
LUTTA (*Madness*).
Messenger.
THESEUS.
Chorus of Aged Thebans.

ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY.

οὐκ ἔσθω κενέβρει * ὁπότεν δὲ θύης τι, κάλει με.

I eat no carrion; when you sacrifice
Some cleanly creature,—call me for
a slice!

WIND, wave, and bark, bear Euthukles¹
and me,

Balaustion, from — not sorrow but despair,
Not memory but the present and its pang!
Athenai, live thou hearted in my heart:
Never, while I live, may I see thee more,
Never again may these repugnant orbs
Ache themselves blind before the hideous

pomp,
The ghastly mirth which mocked thine
overthrow

— Death's entry, Haides' outrage!

Doomed to die, —

Fire should have flung a passion of embrace

About thee till, resplendently inarmed,
(Temple by temple folded to his breast,
All thy white wonder fainting out in ash)
Lightly some vaporous sigh of soul escaped,
And so the Immortals bade Athenai back!
Or earth might sunder and absorb thee,
save,

Buried below Olumpos and its gods,
Akropolis to dominate her realm

¹ Balaustion's husband.

For Koré,² and console the ghosts; or, sea,
What if thy watery plural vastitude,
Rolling unanimous advance, had rushed, 20
Might upon might, a moment, — stood,
one stare,
Sea-face to city-face, thy glaucous wave
Glassing that marbled last magnificence, —
Till fate's pale tremulous foam-flower
tipped the grey,
And when wave broke and overswarmed
and, sucked
To bounds back, multitudinously ceased,
Let land again breathe unconfused with sea,
Attiké was, Athenai was not now!

Such end I could have borne, for I had 30
shared.

But this which, glanced at, aches within
my orbs

To blinding, — bear me thence, bark, wind
and wave!

Me, Euthukles, and, hearted in each heart,
Athenai, undisgraced as Pallas' self,
Bear to my birthplace, Helios' island-bride,
Zeus' darling: thither speed us, homeward-
bound,

Wafted already twelve hours' sail away
From horror, nearer by one sunset Rhodes!

Why should despair be? Since, distinct
above

Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind 40
And floats the cloud, free transport for our
soul

Out of its fleshly durance dim and low, —
Since disembodied soul anticipates
(Thought-borne as now, in rapturous unrestraint)

Above all crowding, crystal silentness,
Above all noise, a silver solitude: —
Surely, where thought so bears soul, soul in
time

May permanently bide, "assert the wise,"
There live in peace, there work in hope
once more —

² Proserpine.

O nothing doubt, Philemon! Greed and
 strife,
 Hatred and cark and care, what place have
 they
 In yon blue liberality of heaven?
 How the sea helps! How rose-smit earth
 will rise
 Breast-high thence, some bright morning,
 and be Rhodes!
 Heaven, earth and sea, my warrant — in
 their name,
 Believe — o'er falsehood, truth is surely
 sphered,
 O'er ugliness beams beauty, o'er this world
 Extends that realm where, "as the wise
 say,"
 10 Philemon, thou shalt see Euripides
 Clearer than mortal sense perceived the
 man!

A sunset nearer Rhodes, by twelve hours'
 sweep
 Of surge secured from horror? Rather
 say,
 Quieted out of weakness into strength.
 I dare invite, survey the scene my sense
 Staggered to apprehend: for, disenvolved
 From the mere outside anguish and con-
 tempt,
 Slowly a justice centred in a doom
 Reveals itself. Ay, pride succumbed to
 pride,
 20 Oppression met the oppressor and was
 matched.

Athenai's vaunt braved Sparté's violence
 Till, in the shock, prone fell Peiraios, low
 Rampart and bulwark lay, as, — timing
 stroke
 Of hammer, axe, and beam hoist, poised
 and swung,
 The very flute-girls blew their laughing
 best,
 In dance about the conqueror while he bade
 Music and merriment help engineery
 Batter down, break to pieces all the trust
 Of citizens once, slaves now. See what
 walls

30 Play substitute for the long double range
 Themistoklean, heralding a guest
 From harbour on to citadel! Each side
 Their senseless walk demolished stone by
 stone,

See, — outer wall as stonelike, — heads
 and hearts,
 Athenai's terror-stricken populace!
 Prattlers, tongue-tied in crouching abject-
 ness, —
 Braggarts, who wring hands wont to flour-
 ish swords

Sophist and rhetorician, demagogue,
 (Argument dumb, authority a jest)
 40 Dikast and eliaist,¹ pleader, litigant,

¹ Judge and juryman.

Quack-priest, sham-prophecy-retailer,
 scout
 O' the customs, sycophant, whate'er the
 style,

Altar-scrap-snatcher, pimp and parasite, —
 Rivalities at truce now each with each,
 Stupefied mud-banks, — such an use they
 serve!

While the one order which performs exact
 To promise, functions faithful last as first,
 What is it but the city's lyric troop,
 Chantress and psaltress, flute-girl, danc-
 ing-girl?

Athenai's harlotry takes laughing care 54
 Their patron miss no pipings, late she
 loved,

But deathward tread at least the kordax-
 step.²

Die! then, who pulled such glory on your
 heads!

There let it grind to powder! Perikles!
 The living are the dead now: death be
 life!

Why should the sunset yonder waste its
 wealth?

Prove thee Olympian! If my heart supply
 Inviolate the structure, — true to type,
 Build me some spirit-place no flesh shall
 find,

As Pheidias may inspire thee: slab on slab, 60
 Renew Athenai, quarry out the cloud,
 Convert to gold yon west extravagance!
 'Nenth Propylaea,³ from Akropolis

By vapoury grade and grade, gold all the
 way,

Step to thy snow-Pnux,⁴ mount thy Bema,⁵
 cloud,

Thunder and lighten thence a Hellas
 through

That shall be better and more beautiful
 And too august for Sparté's foot to spurn!
 Chasmed in the crag, again our Theatre
 Predominates, one purple: Stag hunt- 70
 month,

Brings it not Dionusia? Hail, the Three!
 Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides
 Compete, gain prize or lose prize, godlike
 still.

Nay, lest they lack the old god-exercise —
 Their noble want the unworthy, — as of
 old,

(How otherwise should patience crown
 their might?)

What if each find his ape promoted man,
 His censor raised for antic service still?

Some new Hermippos to pelt Perikles,
 Kratinos to swear Pheidias robbed a shrine, 80
 Eruxis — I suspect, Euripides,

² Cancan. ³ Part of the Acropolis.

⁴ A rocky eminence in Athens frequented by
 orators and their audiences.

⁵ The platform used by the orator.

No brow will ache because with mop and mow
He gibes my poet! There's a dog-faced dwarf

That gets to godship somehow, yet retains
His apehood in the Egyptian hierarchy,
More decent, indecorous just enough:
Why should not dog-ape, graced in due degree,

Grow Momos as thou Zeus? Or didst thou sigh

Rightly with thy Makaria? "After life,
Better no sentiency than turbulence;
Death cures the low contention." Be it so!
Yet progress means contention, to my mind.

Euthukles, who, except for love that speaks,

Art silent by my side while words of mine
Provoke that foe from which escape is vain
Henceforward, wake Athenai's fate and fall, —

Memories asleep as, at the altar-foot
Those Furies in the Oresteian song, —
Do I amiss who, wanting strength, use craft,

Advance upon the foe I cannot fly,
Nor feign a snake is dormant though it gnaw?

That fate and fall, once bedded in our brain,
Roots itself past upwrenching; but coaxed forth,

Encouraged out to practise fork and fang, —
Perhaps, when satiate with prompt sustenance,

It may pine, likelier die than if left swell
In peace by our pretension to ignore,
Or pricked to threefold fury, should our stamp

Bruise and not brain the pest.

A middle course!

What hinders that we treat this tragic theme

As the Three taught when either woke some woe,

— How Klutaimnestra hated, what the pride

Of Iokasté, why Medeia clove
Nature asunder. Small rebuked by large,
We felt our puny hates refine to air,
Our poor prides sink, prevent the humbling hand,

Our petty passions purify their tide.
So, Euthukles, permit the tragedy
To re-enact itself, this voyage through,
Till sunsets end and sunrise brighten Rhodes!

Majestic on the stage of memory,
Peploused and kothorned, let Athenai fall
Once more, nay, oft again till life conclude,
Lent for the lesson: Choros, I and thou!

What else in life seems piteous any more
After such pity, or proves terrible
Beside such terror?

Still — since Phrunichos¹

Offended, by too premature a touch
Of that Milesian smart-place freshly frayed —

(Ah, my poor people, whose prompt remedy

Was — fine the poet, not reform thyself!)⁵⁰
Beware precipitate approach! Rehearse
Rather the prologue, well a year away,
Than the main misery, a sunset old.

What else but fitting prologue to the piece
Style and adventure, stranger than my first
By so much as the issue it enwombed
Lurked big beyond Balaustion's littleness?
Second supreme adventure! O that

Spring,

That eve I told the earlier to my friends!
Where are the four now, with each red-60
ripe mouth

Crumpled so close, no quickest breath it fetched

Could disengage the lip-flower furled to bud

For fear Admetos, — shivering head and foot,

As with sick soul and blind averted face
He trusted hand forth to obey his friend, —
Should find no wife in her cold hand's response,

Nor see the disenshrouded statue start
Alkestis, live the life and love the love!

I wonder, does the streamlet ripple still,
Outsmoothing galingale and watermint
Its mat-floor? while at brim, 'twixt sedge
and sedge,

What bubbleings past Baccheion, broad-
ened much,

Pricked by the reed and fretted by the fly,
Oared by the boatman-spider's pair of arms!

Lenaia² was a gladsome month ago —
Euripides had taught "Andromedé:"
Next month, would teach "Kresphontes"

— which same month
Someone from Phokis, who companioned me

Since all that happened on those temple-
steps,

Would marry me and turn Athenian too. 8c

Now! if next year the masters let the slaves
Do Bacchic service and restore mankind
That trilogy whereof, 'tis noised, one play
Presents the Bacchai, — no Euripides
Will teach the choros, nor shall we be
tinged

By any such grand sunset of his soul,

¹ An Athenian poet who was fined for referring to the defeat at Miletus.

² A Bacchic festival.

Exiles from dead Athenai, not the live
That's in the cloud there with the new-
born star!

Speak to the infinite intelligence,
Sing to the everlasting sympathy!
Winds belly sail, and drench of dancing
brine

Buffet our boat-side, so the prone bound
free!

Condense our voyage into one great day
Made up of sunset-closes: eve by eve,
Resume that memorable night discourse

15 When, — like some meteor brilliance, fire
and fifth,

Or say, his own Amphytheos, deity
And Iung, who, bound on the gods' em-
bassage,

Got men's acknowledgment in kick and
cuff —

We made acquaintance with a visitor
Ominous, appanitional, who went
Strange as he came, but shall not pass away.
Let us attempt that memorable talk,
Clothe the adventure's every incident
With due expression: may not looks be
told,

20 Gesture made speak, and speech so ampli-
fied

That words find blood-warmth which,
cold-writ, they lose?

Recall the night we heard the news from
Thrace.

One year ago, Athenai still herself.

We two were sitting silent in the house,
Yet cheerless hardly. Euthuktes, forgive!
I somehow speak to unseen auditors.

Not you, but — Euthukles had entered,
grave,

Grand, may I say, as who brings laurel-
branch

And message from the tripod: such it
proved.

30 He first removed the garland from his
brow,

Then took my hand and looked into my
face.

"Speak good words!" much misgiving
falter'd I.

"Good words, the best, Balausion? He
is crowned,

Gone with his Attic ivy home to feast.
Since Aiskhunos required companionship,
Pour a libation for Euripides!"

When we had sat the heavier silence out —
"Dead and triumphant still," began reply
To my eye's question. "As he willed he
worked:

And, as he worked, he wanted not, be sure, 40
Triumph his whole life through, submitting
work

To work's right judges, never to the
wrong —

To competency, not ineptitude.

When he had run life's proper race and
worked

Quite to the stade's end, there remained
to try

The stade's turn, should strength dare the
double course.

Had the diables reached, the hundred plays
Accomplished, force in its task and sufficed

To lift along the athlete and ensure

A second wreath, proposed in foils for first, 50

The statist's olive as the poet's bay.

Wiser, he suffered not a twofold aim

Retard his pace, confuse his sight; at once

Poet and statist: though the multitude

Girded him over 'All thine aim thine art?

The idle poet only? No regard

For civic duty, public service, here?

We drop our ballot-bean for Sophokles!

Not only could he write "Antigone"

But — since we argued? whose penned 60

that piece

Might just as well conduct a squadron, —
straight

Good-nut, really he took on him command,
Got laughed at and went back to making
japes

Having allowed us our experiment

Respecting the fit use of irony?

No whit the more did athlete slacken pace

Soon the jeers grew: 'Cold hatred of his
kind,

A sea-cave suits him not the vulgar hearth!

What need of tongue-talk, with a bookish
score

Would stock ten cities?" Shadow of an 70
ass?

No whit the worse did athlete touch the
mark

And, at the turning-point, consign his
score

Of the scornors to that final trilogy

"Hesperia," "Polichinon," and the Match

Of Life Contemplative with Active Life,

Letus against Amphilochus. Ended so

Newswise — began again: for heroes rest

Dropping shadow's evil for the entire man.

And he who thus took Contemplation's
prize

Turn'd stake-point but to face Activity, 80

Out of all shadowy hands extending help

For life's decline pledged to youth's labour

still.

Whatever renovation flatter age. —

Society with pastime, solitude

With peace — he chose the hand that
gave the heart.

Queen of Lemnos and entertainer of Jas. v.

Bade Macedonian Archelaos take
The leavings of Athenai, ash once flame.
For fifty politicians' frosty work,
One poet's ash proved ample and to spare:
He propped the state and filled the treasury,
Counselled the king as might a meaner soul,
Furnished the friend with what shall stand
instead

Of crown and sceptre, star his name about
When these are dust; for him, Euripides
Last the old hand on the old phorminx¹

flung,
Clashed thence 'Alkaion,' maddened 'Pen-
theus' up;

Then music sighed itself away, one moan
Iphigeneia made by Aulis' strand;
With her and music died Euripides.

"The poet-friend who followed him to
Thrace,

Agathon, writes thus much: the merchant-
ship

Moreover brings a message from the king
To young Euripides, who went on board
This morning at Mounuchia: all is true."

I said "Thank Zeus for the great news and
good!"

"Nay, the report is running in brief fire
Through the town's stubbly furrow," he
resumed:

—"Entertains brightly what their favourite
styles

'The City of Gapers'² for a week perhaps,
Supplants three luminous tales, but yester-
day

Pronounced sufficient lamps to last the
month:

How Glauketes, outbidding Morsimos,
Paid market-price for one Kopaic eel
A thousand drachmai, and then cooked
his prize

Not proper conger-fashion but in oil
And nettles, as man fries the foam-fish-
kind;

How all the captains of the triremes, late
Victors at Arginousai, on return

Will, for reward, be straightway put to
death;

How Mikon wagered a Thessalian mime
Trained him by Lais, looked on as com-
plete,

Against Leogoras' blood-mare koppa-
marked,³

Valued six talents, — swore, accomplished
so,

The girl could swallow at a draught, nor
breathe,

A choenix of unmixed Mendesian wine;
And having lost the match will — dine on
herbs!

Three stories late a-flame, at once extinct,
Outblazed by just 'Euripides is dead'!

"I met the concourse from the Theatre,
The audience flocking homeward: victory
Again awarded Aristophanes

Precisely for his old play chopped and
changed

'The Female Celebrators of the Feast' —
That Thesmophoria, tried a second time.

'Never such full success!' — assured the 50
folk,

Who yet stopped praising to have word of
mouth

With 'Euthukles, the bard's own intimate,
Balaustion's husband, the right man to ask.'

"Dead, yes, but how dead, may acquaint-
ance know?

You were the couple constant at his cave:
Tell us now, is it true that women, moved
By reason of his liking Krateros . . .

"I answered 'He was loved by Sokrates.'

"Nay,' said another, 'envy did the work!
For, emulating poets of the place, 60
One Arridaios, one Krateues, both
Established in the royal favour, these . . .'

"Protagoras instructed him," said I.

"Phu,' whistled Comic Platon, 'hear the
fact!

'Twas well said of your friend by Sophokles
'He hate our women? In his verse,
belike:

But when it comes to prose-work, — ha,
ha, ha!"

New climes don't change old manners: so,
it chanced,

Pursuing an intrigue one moonless night
With Arethousian Nikodikos' wife, 70
(Come now, his years were simply seventy-
five)

Crossing the palace-court, what haps he
on

But Archelaos' pack of hungry hounds?
Who tore him piecemeal ere his cry brought
help.'

"I asked: Did not you write 'The Fes-
tivals'?

You best know what dog tore him when
alive.

You others, who now make a ring to hear,
Have not you just enjoyed a second treat,
Proclaimed that ne'er was play more
worthy prize

Than this, myself assisted at, last year, 80
And gave its worth to, — spitting on the
same?

Appraise no poetry, — price cuttlefish,
Or that seaweed-alphestes, scorpion-sort,

¹ Guitar.

² Athens.

³ A certificate of high-breeding.

Much famed for mixing mud with fantasy
On midnights! I interpret no foul
dreams."

- If so said Euthukles, so could not I,
Balaustion, say. After "Lusistraté"
No more for me of "people's privilege,"
No witnessing "the grand old Comedy
Cœval with our freedom, which, curtailed,
Were freedom's deathblow: relic of the past,
When Virtue laughingly told truth to Vice,
10 Uncensured, since the stern mouth, stuffed
with flowers,
Through poetry breathed satire, perfumed
blast
Which sense snuffed up while searched
unto the bone!"
I was a stranger: "For first joy," urged
friends,
"Go hear our Comedy, some patriot piece
That plies the selfish advocates of war
With argument so unevadable
That crash fall Kleons whom the finer play
Of reason, tickling, deeper wounds no whit
Than would a spear-thrust from a savoury-
stalk!"
20 No: you hear knave and fool told crime
and fault,
And see each scourged his quantity of
stripes.
'Rough dealing, awkward language,'
whine our fops:
The world's too squeamish now to bear
plain words
Concerning deeds it acts with gust enough:
But, thanks to wine-lees and democracy,
We've still our stage where truth calls spade
a spade!
Ashamed? Phuromachos' decree pro-
vides
The sex may sit discreetly; witness all,
Sorted, the good with good, the gay with
gay,
30 Themselves unseen, no need to force a
blush.
A Rhodian wife and ignorant so long?
Go hear next play!"
I heard "Lusistraté."
Waves, said to wash pollution from the
world,
Take that plague-memory, cure that pustule
caught
As, past escape, I sat and saw the piece
By one appalled at Phaidra's fate, — the
chaste,
Whom, because chaste, the wicked goddess
chained
To that same serpent of unchastity
She loathed most, and who, coiled so, died
distraught
40 Rather than make submission, loose one
limb
Love-wards, at lambency of honeyed
tongue,

Or torture of the scales which scraped her
snow
— I say, the piece by him who charged
this piece
(Because Euripides shrank not to teach,
If gods be strong and wicked, man, though
weak,
May prove their match by willing to be
good)
With infamies the Scythian's whip should
cure —
"Such outrage done the public — Phaidra
named!
Such purpose to corrupt ingenuous youth,
Such insult cast on female character!" — 50
Why, when I saw that bestiality —
So beyond all brute-beast imagining,
That when, to point the moral at the close,
Poor Salabaccho, just to show how fair
Was "Reconciliation," stripped her
charms,
That exhibition simply bade us breathe,
Seemed something healthy and commend-
able
After obscenity grotesqued so much
It slunk away revolted at itself.
Henceforth I had my answer when our 60
sage
Pattern-proposers seniors pleaded grave
"You fail to fathom here the deep design!
All's acted in the interest of truth,
Religion, and those manners old and dear
Which made our city great when citizens
Like Aristoides and like Miltiades
Wore each a golden tectix¹ in his hair."
What do they wear now under — Kleo-
phon?
Well, for such reasons, — I am out of breath,
But loathsomeness we needs must hurry 70
past, —
I did not go to see, nor then nor now,
The "Thesmophoriazousai." But, since
males
Choose to brave first, blame afterward, nor
brand
Without fair taste of what they stigma-
tise,
Euthukles had not missed the first display,
Original portrait of Euripides
By "Virtue laughingly reproving Vice":
"Virtue," — the author, Aristophanes,
Who mixed an image out of his own depths,
Ticketed as I tell you. Oh, this time 80
No more pretension to recondite worth!
No joke in aid of Peace, no demagogue
Pun-pelleted from Pnux, no kordax-dance
Overt helped covertly the Ancient Faith!
All now was muck, home-produce, honest-
man
The author's soul secreted to a play
Which gained the prize that day we heard
the death.
¹ Grasshopper, used as a badge of honour.

I thought "How thoroughly death alters things!

Where is the wrong now, done our dead and great?

How natural seems grandeur in relief,
Cliff-base with frothy spites against its calm!"

Euthukles interposed — he read my thought —

"O'er them, too, in a moment came the change.

The crowd's enthusiastic, to a man:
Since, rake as such may please the ordure-heap

Because of certain sparkles presumed ore,
At first flash of true lightning overhead,
They look up, nor resume their search too soon.

The insect-scattering sign is evident,
And nowhere winks a fire-fly rival now
Nor bustles any beetle of the brood
With trundled dung-ball meant to menace heaven.

Contrariwise, the cry is 'Honour him!' —
'A statue in the theatre!' wants one;
Another 'Bring the poet's body back,
Bury him in Peiraios: o'er his tomb
Let Alkamenes carve the music-witch,
The songstress-seiren, meed of melody:
Thoukudides invent his epitaph!' —
To-night the whole town pays its tribute thus."

Our tribute should not be the same, my friend!

Statue? Within our heart he stood, he stands!

As for the vest outgrown now by the form,
Low flesh that clothed high soul, — a vesture's fate —

Why, let it fade, mix with the elements
There where it, falling, freed Euripides!
But for the soul that's tutelary now
Till time end, o'er the world to teach and bless —

How better hail its freedom than by first
Singing, we two, its own song back again,
Up to that face from which flowed beauty —
face

Now abler to see triumph and take love
Than when it glorified Athenai once?

The sweet and strange Alkestis, which saved me,

Secured me — you, ends nowise, to my mind,
In pardon of Admetos. Hearts are fain
To follow cheerful weary Herakles
Striding away from the huge gratitude,
Club-shouldered, lion-fleece round loin and flank,

Bound on the next new labour "height o'er height

Ever surmounting, — destiny's decree!"

Thither He helps us: that's the story's end;

He smiling said so, when I told him mine —
My great adventure, how Alkestis helped.
Afterward, when the time for parting fell,
He gave me, with two other precious gifts,
This third and best, consummating the 5th
grace,

"Herakles," writ by his own hand, each line.

"If it have worth, reward is still to seek.
Somebody, I forget who, gained the prize
And proved arch-poet: time must show!"
he smiled:

"Take this, and, when the noise tires out,
judge me —

Some day, not slow to dawn, when somebody —

Who? I forget — proves nobody at all!"

Is not that day come? What if you and I
Re-sing the song, inaugurate the fame?
We have not waited to acquaint ourselves 6th
With song and subject; we can prologise
How, at Eurustheus' bidding, — hate
strained hard, —

Herakles had departed, one time more,
On his last labour, worst of all the twelve;
Descended into Haides, thence to drag
The triple-headed hound, which sun should see

Spite of the god whose darkness whelped the Fear.

Down went the hero, "back — how should he come?"

So laughed King Lukos, an old enemy,
Who judged that absence testified defeat 7th
Of the land's loved one, — since he saved the land

And for that service wedded Megara
Daughter of Thebai, realm her child should rule.

Ambition, greed and malice seized their prey,

The Heracleian House, defenceless left,
Father and wife and child, to trample out
Trace of its hearth-fire: since extreme old age

Wakes pity, woman's wrong wins championship,

And child may grow up man and take revenge.

Hence see we that, from out their palace- 8th
home

Hunted, for last resource they cluster now
Couched on the cold ground, hapless supplicants

About their courtyard altar, — Household Zeus

It is, the Three in funeral garb beseech,
Delaying death so, till deliverance come —
When did it ever? — from the deep and dark.

And thus breaks silence old Amphitruon's
voice. . . .

Say I not true thus far, my Euthukles?

Suddenly, torch-light! knocking at the
door,

Loud, quick, "Admittance for the revels'
lord!"

Some unintelligible Komos-cry —
*Raw-flesh red, no cap upon his head,
Dionusos, Bacchos, Phales, Iacchos,
In let him reel with the kid-skin at his heel,
Where it buries in the spread of the bushy
myrtle-bed!*

10 (Our Rhodian Jackdaw-song was sense
to that!)

Then laughter, outbursts ruder and more
rude,

Through which, with silver point, a fluting
pierced,

And ever "Open, open, Bacchos bids!"

But at last — one authoritative word,
One name of an immense significance:
For Euthukles rose up, threw wide the door.

There trooped the Choros of the Comedy
Crowned and triumphant; first, those
flushed Fifteen

Men that wore women's garb, grotesque
disguise.

20 Then marched the Three, — who played
Mnesilochos,

Who, Toxotes, and who, robed right,
masked rare,

Monkeyed our Great and Dead to heart's
content

That morning in Athenai. Masks were
down

And robes doffed now; the sole disguise
was drink.

Mixing with these — I know not what gay
crowd,

Girl-dancers, flute-boys, and pre-eminent
Among them, — doubtless draped with
such reserve

As stopped fear of the fifty drachma fine
(Beside one's name on public fig-tree
nailed)

30 Which women pay who in the streets walk
bare, —

Behold Elaphion of the Persic dance!
Who lately had frisked fawn-foot, and the
rest,

— All for the Patriot Cause, the Antique
Faith,

The Conservation of True Poesy —
Could I but penetrate the deep design!

Elaphion, more Peiraios-known as
"Phaps,"

Tripped at the head of the whole banquet-
band

Who came in front now, as the first fell
back;

And foremost — the authoritative voice,
The revels-leader, he who gained the prize, 4
And got the glory of the Archon's feast —
There stood in person Aristophanes.

And no ignoble presence! On the bulge
Of the clear baldness, — all his head-one
brow, —

True, the veins swelled, blue network, and
there surged

A red from cheek to temple, — then
retired

As if the dark-leaved chaplet damped a
flame, —

Was never nursed by temperance or
health.

But huge the eyeballs rolled back native
fire,

Imperiously triumphant: nostrils wide 5
Waited their incense; while the pursed
mouth's pout

Aggressive, while the beak supreme above,
While the head, face, nay, pillared throat

thrown back,
Beard whitening under like a vinous foam,

These made a glory, of such insolence —
I thought, — such domineering defty

Hephaistos might have carved to cut the
brine

For his gay brother's prow, imbrue that
path

Which, purpling, recognised the conqueror.

Impudent and majestic: drunk, perhaps,
But that's religion; sense too plainly

snuffed:

Still, sensuality was grown a rite.

What I had disbelieved most proved most
true.

There was a mind here, mind a-wantoning
At ease of undisputed mastery

Over the body's brood, those appetites.
Oh but he grasped them grandly, as the

god
His either struggling handful, — hurtless
snakes

Held deep down, strained hard off from
side and side!

Mastery his, theirs simply servitude,
So well could firm fist help intrepid eye.

Fawning and fulsome, had they licked and
hissed?

At mandate of one muscle, order reigned.
They had been wreathing much familiar

now

About him on his entry; but a squeeze
Choked down the pests to place: their lord

stood free.

Forward he stepped: I rose and fronted
him.

"Hail, house, the friendly to Euripides!"
(So he began) "Hail, each inhabitant!"

You, lady? What, the Rhodian? Form
and face,
Victory's self upsoaring to receive
The poet? Right they named you . . .
some rich name,
Vowel-buds thorned about with consonants,
Fragrant, felicitous, rose-glow enriched
By the Isle's unguent: some diminished
end
In *ion*, Kallistion? delicater still,
Kubelon or Melittion, — or, suppose
(Less vulgar love than bee or violet)
Phibalion, for the mouth split red-fig-wise,
Korakinidion for the coal-black hair,
Nettarion, Phabion for the darlingness?
But no, it was some fruit-flower, Rhoidion
. . . ha,
We near the balsam-bloom — Balaustion!
Thanks,
Rhodes! Folk have called me Rhodian,
do you know?
Not fools so far! Because, if Helios
wived,
As Pindaros sings somewhere prettily,
Here blooms his offspring, earth-flesh with
sun-fire,
Rhodes' blood and Helios' gold. My
phorminx, boy!
Why does the boy hang back and baulk
an ode
Tiptoe at spread of wing? But like
enough,
Sunshine frays torchlight. Witness whom
you scare,
Superb Balaustion! Look outside the
house!
Pho, you have quenched my Komos by
first frown
Struck dead all joyance: not a fluting
puffs
From idle cheekband! Ah, my Choros
too?
You've eaten cuckoo-apple?¹ Dumb, you
dogs?
So much good Thasian wasted on your
throat
And out of them not one *Threttanelo*?
Nebiaretai!² Because this earth-and-sun
Product looks wormwood and all bitter
herbs?
Well, do I blench, though me she hates the
most
Of mortals? By the cabbage, off they
slink!
You, too, my Chrusomelofonthion-Phaps,
Girl-golding-beetle-beauty? You, abashed,
Who late, supremely unabashable,
Propped up my play at that important
point
When Artamouxia tricks the Toxotes?

¹ *Arum maculatum*, to eat which makes a fool of you.

² Vulgar noises imitating familiar sounds.

Ha, ha, — thank Hermes for the lucky
throw, —
We came last comedy of the whole seven, 40
So went all fresh to judgment well-dis-
posed
For who should fatly feast them, eye and
ear,
We two between us! What, you fail your
friend?
Away then, free me of your cowardice!
Go, get you the goat's breakfast!³ Fare
afield,
Ye circumcised of Egypt, pigs to sow,
Back to the Priest's or forward to the
crows,
So you but rid me of such company!
Once left alone, I can protect myself 50
From statuesque Balaustion pedestalled
On much disapprobation and mistake!
She dares not beat the sacred brow,
beside!
Bacchos' equipment, ivy safeguards well
As Phoibos' bay.

"They take me at my word!
One comfort is, I shall not want them
long,
The Archon's cry creaks, creaks, 'Curtail
expense!'
The war wants money, year the twenty-
sixth!
Cut down our Choros number, clip costume,
Save birds' wings, beetles' armour, spend
the cash
In three-crest skull-caps, three days' salt- 60
fish-slice,
Three-banked-ships for these sham-am-
bassadors,
And what not: any cost but Comedy's!
'No Choros' — soon will follow; what
care I?
Archinos and Agurhios, scrape your flint,
Flay your dead dog, and curry favour so!
Choros in rags, with loss of leather next,

We lose the boys' vote, lose the song and
dance,
Lose my Elaphion! Still, the actor stays.
Save but my acting, and the baldhead
bard⁴

Kudathenaian and Pandionid, 70
Son of Philippos, Aristophanes
Surmounts his rivals now as heretofore,
Though stinted to mere sober prosy
verse —
'Manners and men,' so squeamish gets the
world!
No more 'Step forward, strip for anapæsts!'
No calling naughty people by their names,
No tickling audience into gratitude

³ Vulgar expression connected with the wor-
ship of the god.

⁴ Aristophanes himself.

With chickpease, barleygroats and nuts
and plums,
No setting Salabaccho . . ."

As I turned —

"True, lady, I am tolerably drunk:
The proper inspiration! Otherwise, —
Phrunichos, Choirilos! — had Aischulos
So foiled you at the goat-song? Drink's a
god.

How else did that old doating driveller
Kratinos foil me, match my masterpiece
The 'Clouds'? I swallowed cloud-distil-
ment — dew

10 Undimmed by any grape-blush, knit my
brow

And gnawed my style and laughed my
learnedest;

While he worked at his 'Willow-wicker-
flask,'

Swigging at that same flask by which he
swore,

Till, sing and empty, sing and fill again,
Somehow result was — what it should not
be

Next time, I promised him and kept my
word!

Hence, brimful now of Thasian . . . I'll
be bound,

Mendesian, merely: triumph-night, you
know,

The High Priest entertains the conqueror,
20 And, since war worsens all things, stingily
The rascal starves whom he is bound to
stuff,

Choros and actors and their lord and king
The poet; supper, still he needs must
spread —

And this time all was conscientious fare:
He knew his man, his match, his master —
made

Amends, spared neither fish, flesh, fowl nor
wine:

So merriment increased, I promise you,
Till — something happened."

Here he strangely paused.

"After that, — well, it either was the cup
30 To the Good Genius, our concluding
pledge,

That wrought me mischief, decently un-
mixed, —

Or, what if, when *that* happened, need
arose

Of new libation? Did you only know
What happened! Little wonder I am
drunk."

Euthukles, o'er the boat-side, quick, what
change,

Watch, in the water! But a second since,
It laughed a ripply spread of sun and sea,

Ray fused with wave, to never disunite.
Now, sudden all the surface, hard and
black,

Lies a quenched light, dead motion: what 40
the cause?

Look up and lo, the menace of a cloud
Has solemnised the sparkling, spoiled the
sport!

Just so, some overshadow, some new care
Stopped all the mirth and mocking on his
face

And left there only such a dark surmise
— No wonder if the revel disappeared,
So did his face shed silence every side!
I recognised a new man fronting me.

"So!" he smiled, piercing to my thought
at once,

"You see myself? Balaustion's fixed 50
regard

Can strip the proper Aristophanes
Of what our sophists, in their jargon, style
His accidents? My soul sped forth but
now

To meet your hostile survey, — soul un-
seen,

Yet veritably cinct for soul-defence
With satyr sportive quips, cranks, boss and
spike,

Just as my visible body paced the street,
Environed by a boon companionship
Your apparition also puts to flight.

Well, what care I if, unaccounted twice, 60
I front my foe — no comicality

Round soul, and body-guard in banish-
ment?

Thank your eyes' searching, undisguised I
stand:

The merest female child may question me.
Spare not, speak bold, Balaustion!"

I did speak:

"Bold speech be — welcome to this
honoured hearth,

Good Genius! Glory of the poet, glow
O' the humourist who castigates his kind,
Suave summer-lightning lambency which
plays

On stag-horned tree, misshapen crag askew, 70
Then vanishes with unvindictive smile

After a moment's laying black earth bare.
Splendour of wit that springs a thunder-
ball —

Satire — to burn and purify the world,
True aim, fair purpose: just wit justly
strikes

Injustice, — right, as rightly quells the
wrong,

Finds out in knaves', fools', cowards'
armoury

The tricky tinselled place fire flashes
through,

No damage else, sagacious of true ore;

Wit, learned in the laurel, leaves each
wreath
O'er lyric shell or tragic barbiton,¹ —
Though alien gauds be singed, — un-
desecrate,
The genuine solace of the sacred brow.
Ay, and how pulses flame a patriot-star
Steadfast athwart our country's night of
things,
To beacon, would she trust no meteor-
blaze,
Athenai from the rock she steers for
straight!
O light, light, light, I hail light everywhere;
No matter for the murk that was, —
perchance,
That will be, — certes, never should have
been
Such orb's associate!

"Aristophanes!

"The merest female child may question
you?"
Once, in my Rhodes, a portent of the wave
Appalled our coast: for many a darkened
day,
Intolerable mystery and fear.
Who snatched a furtive glance through
crannied peak,
Could but report of snake-scale, lizard-
limb, —
So swam what, making whirlpools as it
went,
Maddened the brine with wrath or monstrous
sport.
"Tis Tuphon, loose, unmanacled from
mount,
Declared the priests, 'no way appeasable
Unless perchance by virgin-sacrifice!' —
Thus grew the terror and o'erhung the
doom —
Until one eve a certain female-child
Strayed in safe ignorance to seacoast edge,
And there sat down and sang to please her-
self.
When all at once, large-looming from his
wave,
Out leaped, chin hand-propped, pensive
on the ledge,
A sea-worn face, sad as mortality,
Divine with yearning after fellowship.
He rose but breast-high. So much god
she saw;
So much she sees now, and does rever-
ence!"
Ah, but there followed tail-splash, frisk of
fin!
Let cloud pass, the sea's ready laugh out-
breaks.
No very godlike trace retained the mouth
Which mocked with —

¹ A lyre.

"So, He taught you tragedy"
I always asked 'Why may not women
act?'
Nay, wear the comic visor just as well;
Or, better, quite cast off the face-disguise.
And voice-distortion, simply look and
speak,
Real women playing women as men —
men!
I shall not wonder if things come to that,
Some day when I am distant far enough.
Do you conceive the quite new Comedy
When laws allow? laws only let girls
dance,
Pipe, posture, — above all, Elaphionize,
Provided they keep decent — that is,
dumb.
Ay, and, conceiving, I would execute,
Had I but two lives: one were over- 50
worked!
How penetrate encrusted prejudice,
Pierce ignorance three generations thick
Since first Sousarion crossed our bound-
dary?
He battered with a big Megaric stone;
Chionides felled oak and rough-hewed
thence
This club I wield now, having spent my life
In planing knobs and sticking studs to
shine;
Somebody else must try mere polished
steel!"
Emboldened by the sober mood's return,
"Meanwhile," said I, "since planed and 60
studded club
Once more has pashed competitors to
dust,
And poet proves triumphant with that play
Euthukles found last year unfortunate, —
Does triumph spring from smoothness still
more smoothed,
Fresh studs sown thick and threefold? In
plain words,
Have you exchanged brute-blows, —
which teach the brute
Man may surpass him in brutality, —
For human fighting, or true god like force
Which breathes persuasion nor needs fight
at all?
Have you essayed attacking ignorance, 70
Convicting folly, by their opposites,
Knowledge and wisdom? not by yours for
ours,
Fresh ignorance and folly, new for old,
Greater for less, your crime for our mis-
take!
It so success at last have crowned desert,
Bringing surprise (dashed haply by con-
cern
At your discovery such wild waste of
strength
— And what strength! — went so long to
keep in vogue

Such warfare — and what warfare! —
 shamed so fast,
 So soon made obsolete, as fell their foe
 By the first arrow native to the orb,
 First onslaught worthy Aristophanes) —
 Was this conviction's entry that same
 strange
 'Something that happened' to confound
 your feast?"

"Ah, did he witness then my play that
 failed,
 First 'Thesmophoriazousai'? Well and
 good!

But did he also see, — your Euthukles, —
 10 My 'Grasshoppers' which followed and
 failed too,
 Three months since, at the 'Little-in-the-
 Fields'?"¹

"To say that he did see that First —
 should say
 He never cared to see its following."

"There happens to be reason why I wrote
 First play and second also. Ask the cause!
 I warrant you receive ere talk be done,
 Fit answer, authorising either act.
 But here's the point: as Euthukles made
 vow

Never again to taste my quality,
 20 So I was minded next experiment
 Should tickle palate — yea, of Euthukles!
 Not by such utter change, such absolute
 A topsy-turvy of stage-habitude
 As you and he want, — Comedy built
 fresh,
 By novel brick and mortar, base to roof, —
 No, for I stand too near and look too
 close!

Pleasure and pastime yours, spectators
 brave,
 Should I turn art's fixed fabric upside
 down!

Little you guess how such tough work
 tasks soul!

30 Not overtasks, though: give fit strength
 fair play,
 And strength's a demiourgos! Art re-
 newed?

Ay, in some closet where strength shuts
 out — first

The friendly faces, sympathetic cheer:
 'More of the old provision none supplies
 So bounteously as thou, — our love, our
 pride,

Our author of the many a perfect piece!
 Stick to that standard, change were de-
 cadence!"

Next, the unfriendly: 'This time, strain
 will tire,

He's fresh, Ameipsias thy antagonist!"

40 — Or better, in some Salaminian cave

Where sky and sea and solitude make earth
 And man and noise one insignificance,
 Let strength propose itself, — behind the
 world, —

Sole prize worth winning, work that
 satisfies

Strength it has dared and done strength's
 uttermost!

After which, — clap-to closet and quit
 cave, —

Strength may conclude in Archelao's
 court,

And yet esteem the silken company
 So much sky-scud, sea-froth, earth-thistle-
 down,

For aught their praise or blame should joy 50
 or grieve.

Strength amid crowds as late in solitude
 May lead the still life, ply the wordless
 task:

Then only, when seems need to move or
 speak,

Moving — for due respect, when statesmen
 pass,

(Strength, in the closet, watched how
 spiders spin)

Speaking — when fashion shows intelli-
 gence,

(Strength, in the cave, oft whistled to the
 gulls)

In short, has learnt first, practised after-
 wards!

Despise the world and reverence your-
 self, —

Why, you may unmake things and remake 60
 things,

And throw behind you, unconcerned
 enough,

What's made or marred: 'you teach men,
 are not taught!'

So marches off the stage Euripides!

"No such thin fare feeds flesh and blood
 like mine,

No such faint fume of fancy sates my soul,
 No such seclusion, closet, cave or court,

Suits either: give me Iostephanos²
 Worth making happy what coarse way she
 will —

O happy-maker, when her cries increase
 About the favourite! 'Aristophanes! 70

More grist to mill, here's Kleophon to
 grind!

He's for refusing peace, though Sparté cede
 Even Dekelia! Here's Kleonumos

Declaring — though he threw away his
 shield,

He'll thrash you till you lay your lyre
 aside!

Orestes bids mind where you walk of
 nights —

He wants your cloak as you his cudgelling:

¹ Country Dionysian revels.

² Violet-crowned Athens.

Here's, finally, Melanthios fat with fish,
The gormandiser-spendthrift-dramatist!
So, bustle! Pounce on opportunity!
Let fun a-screaming in Parabasis,¹
Find food for folk agape at either end,
Mad for amusement! Times grow better
too,

And should they worsen, why, who
laughs, forgets.

In no case, venture boy-experiments!
Old wine's the wine: new poetry drinks
raw:

10 Two plays a season is your pledge, beside;
So, give us 'Wasps' again, grown hornets
now!"

Then he changed.

"Do you so detect in me —
Brow-bald, chin-bearded, me, curved
cheek, carved lip.

Or where soul sits and reigns in either
eye —

What suits the — stigma, I say, — style
say you,

Of 'Wine-lees-poet'? Bravest of buffoons,
Less blunt than Telekleides, less obscene
Than Mutilos, Hermippos: quite a
match

In elegance for Eupolis himself,

20 Yet pungent as Kratinos at his best?
Graced with traditional immunity

Ever since, much about my grandsire's
time,

Some funny village-man in Megara,
Lout-lord and clown-king, used a privi-
lege,

As due religious drinking-bouts came round,
To daub his phyz, — no, that was after-
ward, —

He merely mounted cart with mates of
choice

And traversed country, taking house by
house,

At night, — because of danger in the
freak, —

30 Then hollaed 'Skin-flint starves his
labourers!

Clench-fist stows figs away, cheats govern-
ment!

Such an one likes to kiss his neighbour's
wife,

And beat his own; while such another . . .
Boh!

Soon came the broad day, circumstantial
tale,

Dancing and verse, and there's our Com-
edy,

There's Mullos, there's Euetes, there's the
stock

I shall be proud to graft my powers upon!
Protected? Punished quite as certainly

When Archons pleased to lay down each
his law, —

Your Morucheides-Surakosios sort, — 40

Each season, 'No more naming citizens,
Only abuse the vice, the vicious spare!

Observe, henceforth no Areopagite
Demean his rank by writing Comedy!

(They one and all could write the 'Clouds'
of course.)

'Needs must we nick expenditure, allow
Comedy half a choros, supper — none,

Times being hard, while applicants in-
crease

For, what costs cash, the Tragic Trilogy.'
Lofty Tragedians! How they lounge aloof 50

Each with his Triad, three plays to my
one,

Not counting the contemptuous fourth, the
frank

Concession to mere mortal levity,
Satyric pittance tossed our beggar-world!

Your proud Euripides from first to last
Doled out some five such, never deigned us
more!

And these — what curds and whey for
marrowy wine!

That same Alkestis you so rave about
Passed muster with him for a Satyr-play,

The prig! — why trifle time with toys and 60
skits

When he could stuff four ragbags sausage-
wise

With sophistry, with bookish odds and
ends,

Sokrates, meteors, moonshine, 'Life's not
Life,'

'The tongue swore, but unsworn the
mind remains,'

And fifty such concoctions, crab-tree-fruit
Digested while, head low and heels in
heaven,

He lay, let Comics laugh — for privilege!
Looked puzzled on, or pityingly off,

But never dreamed of paying gibe by jeer,
Buffet by blow: plenty of proverb-pokes 70

At vice and folly, wicked kings, mad mobs!
No sign of wincing at my Comic lash,

No protest against infamous abuse,
Malignant censure, — nought to prove I
scourged

With tougher thong than leek-and-onion-
plait!

If ever he glanced gloom, aggrieved at all,
The aggriever must be — Aischulos per-
haps:

Or Sophokles he'd take exception to.
— Do you detect in me — in me, I ask,

The man like to accept this measurement 80
Of faculty, contentedly sit classed

Mere Comic Poet — since I wrote 'The
Birds'?"

I thought there might lurk truth in jest's
disguise.

¹ Comic chorus.

- "Thanks!" he resumed, so quick to construe smile!
- "I answered — in my mind — these gapers thus:
- Since old wine's ripe and new verse raw, you judge —
- What if I vary vintage-mode and mix Blossom with must, give nosegay to the brew,
- Fining, refining, gently, surely, till The educated taste turns unawares From customary dregs to draught divine? Then answered — with my lips: More 'Wasps' you want?
- 10 Come next year and I give you 'Grass-hoppers'!
- And 'Grasshoppers' I gave them, — last month's play.
- They formed the Chorus. Alkibiades, No longer Triphales but Trilophos, (Whom I called Darling-of-the-Summer-time,
- Born to be nothing else but beautiful And brave, to eat, drink, love his life away)
- Persuades the Tettix (our Autochthon-brood,
- That sip the dew and sing on olive-branch Above the ant-and-emmet populace)
- 20 To summon all who meadow, hill and dale Inhabit — bee, wasp, woodlouse, dragon-fly —
- To band themselves against red nipper-nose
- Stagbeetle, huge Taigetian (you guess — Sparté) Athenai needs must battle with, Because her sons are grown effeminate To that degree — so moribifies their flesh The poison-drama of Euripides, Morals and music — there's no antidote Occurs save warfare which inspirits blood,
- 30 And brings us back perchance the blessed time
- When (Chorus takes up tale) our commonalty
- Firm in primæval virtue, antique faith, Ere earwig-sophist plagued or pismire-sage,
- Cocked no noddle up with A, b, g, Book-learning, logic-chopping, and the moon,
- But just employed their brains on 'Ruppapai',¹
- Row, boys, munch barley-bread, and take your ease —
- Mindful, however, of the tier beneath!
- Ah, golden epoch! while the nobler sort
- 40 (Such needs must study, no contesting that!)
- Wore no long curls but used to crop their hair,
- Gathered the tunic well about the ham,
- Remembering 'twas soft sand they used for seat
- At school-time, while — mark this — the lesson long,
- No learner ever dared to cross his legs! Then, if you bade him take the myrtle-bough
- And sing for supper — 'twas some grave romaunt
- How man of Mituléné, wondrous wise, Jumped into hedge, by mortals quickset called,*
- And there, anticipating Oidipous, Scratched out his eyes and scratched them in again.*
- None of your Phaidras, Augés, Kanakés, To mincing music, turn, trill, tweedle-trash,
- Whence comes that Marathon is obsolete! Next, my Antistrophé was — praise of Peace:
- Ah, could our people know what Peace implies!
- Home to the farm and furrow! Grub one's vine,
- Romp with one's Thratta, pretty serving-girl,
- When wife's busy bathing! Eat and drink,
- And drink and eat, what else is good in life? 60
- Slice hare, toss pancake, gaily gurgle down The Thasian grape in celebration due Of Bacchos! Welcome, dear domestic rite,
- When wife and sons and daughters, Thratta too,
- Pour pea-soup as we chant delectably *In Bacchos reels, his tunic at his heels!*
- Enough, you comprehend, — I do at least! Then, — be but patient, — the Parabasis! Pray! For in that I also pushed reform.
- None of the self-laudation, vulgar brag, 70 Vainglorious rivals cultivate so much! No! If some merest word in Art's defence Justice demanded of me, — never fear! Claim was preferred, but dignifiedly.
- A cricket asked a locust (winged, you know)
- What he had seen most rare in foreign parts?
- 'I have flown far,' chirped he, 'North, East, South, West,
- And nowhere heard of poet worth a fig If matched with Bald-head here, Aigina's boast,
- Who in this play bids rivalry despair 80 Past, present, and to come, so marvellous His Tragic, Comic, Lyric excellence! Whereof the fit reward were (not to speak Of dinner every day at public cost I' the Prutaneion) supner with yourselves, My Public, best dish offered bravest bard! No more! no sort of sin against good taste! Then, satire, — Oh, a plain necessity!

¹ A sailor's cry.

But I won't tell you: for — could I dis-
 pense
 With one more gird at old Aripkrades?
 How scorpion-like he feeds on human
 flesh —
 Ever finds out some novel infamy
 Unutterable, inconceivable,
 Which all the greater need was to describe
 Minutely, each tail-twist at ink-shed
 time . . .
 Now, what's your gesture caused by?
 What you loathe,
 Don't I loathe doubly, else why take such
 pains
 To tell it you? But keep your prejudice!
 My audience justified you! House-
 breakers!
 This pattern-purity was played and failed
 Last Rural Dionusia — failed! for why?
 Ameipsias followed with the genuine stuff.
 He had been mindful to engage the Four —
 Karkinos and his dwarf-crab-family —
 Father and sons, they whirled like spin-
 ning-tops,
 Choros gigantically poked his fun,
 The boys' frank laugh relaxed the seniors'
 brow,
 The skies re-echoed victory's acclaim,
 Ameipsias gained his due, I got my dose
 Of wisdom for the future. Purity?
 No more of that next month, Athenai mine!
 Contrive new cut of robe who will — I
 patch
 The old exomis, add no purple sleeve,
 The Thesmophoriazousai, smartened up
 With certain plaits, shall please, I promise
 you!
 "Yes, I took up the play that failed last
 year,
 And re-arranged things; threw adroitly
 in, —
 No Parachoregema,¹ — men to match
 My women there already; and when these
 (I had a hit at Aristullos here,
 His plan how womankind should rule the
 roast)
 Drove men to plough — 'A-field, ye
 cribbed of cape!
 Men showed themselves exempt from
 service straight
 Stupidously, till all the boys cried
 'Brave!
 Then for the elders, I bethought me too,
 Improved upon Mnesilochos' release
 From the old bowman, board and bind-
 ing-strap:
 I made his son-in-law Euripides
 Engage to put both shrewish wives away —
 'Gravity' one, the other 'Sophist-lore' —
 And mate with the Bald Bard's hetairai
 twain —

¹ Secondary chorus.

'Goodhumour' and 'Indulgence': on they
 tripped,
 Murrhiné, Akalanthis, — 'beautiful
 Their whole belongings' — crowd joined
 choros there!
 And while the Toxotes wound up his part
 By shower of nuts and sweetmeats on the
 mob,
 The woman-choros celebrated New
 Kalligeneia, the frank last-day rite.
 Brief, I was chaired and caressed and
 crowned
 And the whole theatre broke out a-roar,
 Echoed my admonition — choros-cap
Rivals of mine, your hands to your faces!
Summon no more the Muses, the Graces,
Since here by my side they have chosen their
places!
 And so we all flocked merrily to feast,
 I, my choragos, choros, actors, mates
 And flutes aforesaid, friends in crowd, no
 fear,
 At the Priest's supper; and hilarity
 Grew none the less that, early in the piece,
 Ran a report, from row to row close-
 packed,
 Of messenger's arrival at the Port
 With weighty tidings, 'Of Lusandros'
 flight,
 Opined one; 'That Euboeia penitent
 Sends the Confederation fifty ships,'
 Preferred another; while 'The Great
 King's Eye'²
 Has brought a present for Elaphion here
 That rarest peacock Kompalakuthes!
 Such was the supposition of a third.
 'No matter what the news,' friend Strattis
 laughed,
 'It won't be worse for waiting: while each
 click
 Of the klepsudra sets a-shaking grave
 Resentment in our shark's-head, boiled and
 spoiled
 By this time: dished in Sphettian vinegar,
 Silphion and honey, served with cocks'-
 brain-sauce!
 So, swift to supper, Poet! No mistake,
 This play; nor, like the unflavoured
 "Grasshoppers,"
 Salt without thyme!' Right merrily we
 supped,
 Till — something happened.
 "Out it shall, at last!
 "Mirth drew to ending, for the cup was
 crowned
 To the Triumphant! 'Kleonclapper erst,
 Now, Plier of a scourge Euripides
 Fairly turns tail from, flying Attiké
 For Makedonia's rocks and frosts and
 bears,

² A nickname in "The Acharnians."

Where, furry grown, he growls to match the squeak

Of girl-voiced, crocus-vested Agathon!
Ha ha, he he! When suddenly a knock —
Sharp, solitary, cold, authoritative.

"*Babaiax!* Sokrates a-passing by,
A-peering in for Aristullos' sake,
To put a question touching Comic Law?"

"No! Enters an old pale-swathed majesty,
Makes slow mute passage through two
ranks as mute,
10 (Strattis stood up with all the rest, the sneak!)

Grey brow still bent on ground, upraised at length

When, our Priest reached, full-front the vision paused.

"'Priest!' — the deep tone succeeded the fixed gaze —

'Thou carest that thy god have spectacle
Decent and seemly; wherefore I announce
That, since Euripides is dead to-day,
My Choros, at the Greater Feast, next
month,
Shall, clothed in black, appear ungarlanded!'

"Then the grey brow sank low, and Sophokles

20 Re-swathed him, sweeping doorward:
mutely passed

'Twixt rows as mute, to mingle possibly
With certain gods who convoy age to port;
And night resumed him.

"When our stupor broke,
Chirpings took courage, and grew audible.

'Dead — so one speaks now of Euripides!
Ungarlanded dance Choros, did he say?
I guess the reason: in extreme old age
No doubt such have the gods for visitants.
Why did he dedicate to Herakles

30 An altar else, but that the god, turned Judge,

Told him in dream who took the crown of gold?

He who restored Akropolis the theft,
Himself may feel perhaps a timely twinge
At thought of certain other crowns he filched

From — who now visits Herakles the Judge.

Instance "*Medeia*!" that play yielded palm

To Sophokles; and he again — to whom?
Euphorion! Why? Ask Herakles the Judge!

'Ungarlanded, just means — economy!

40 Suppress robes, chaplets, everything suppress

Except the poet's present! An old tale
Put capitably by Trugaios — eh?

— News from the world of transformation strange!

How Sophokles is grown Simonides.

And, — aged, rotten, — all the same, for greed

Would venture on a hurdle out to sea! —

So jokes Philonides. Kallistratos
Retorts — Mistake! Instead of stinginess,

The fact is, in extreme decrepitude,

He has discarded poet and turned priest, so

Priest of Half-Hero Alkon: visited

In his own house too by Asklepios' self,

So he avers. Meanwhile, his own estate

Lies fallow; Iophon's the manager, —

Nay, touches up a play, brings out the same,

Asserts true sonship. See to what you sink

After your dozen-dozen prodigies!

Looking so old — Euripides seems young,
Born ten years later.'

'Just his tricky style!

Since, stealing first away, he wins first word

Out of good-natured rival Sophokles,

Procures himself no bad panegyric.

Had fate willed otherwise, himself were taxed

To pay survivor's-tribute, — harder squeezed

From anybody beaten first to last,

Than one who, steadily a conqueror,

Finds that his magnanimity is tasked

To merely make pretence and — beat itself!

"So chirped the feasters though suppressedly.

"But I — what else do you suppose? — had pierced

Quite through friends' outside-straining,

foes' mock-praise,

And reached conviction hearted under all.

Death's rapid line had closed a life's account,

And cut off, left unalterably clear

The summed-up value of Euripides.

"Well, it might be the Thasian! Certainly

There sang suggestive music in my ears;

And, through — what sophists style — the wall of sense

My eyes pierced: death seemed life and life seemed death,

Envisaged that way, now, which I, before,

Conceived was just a moonstruck mood.

Quite plain

There re-insisted, — ay, each prim stiff phrase

Of each old play, my still-new laughing-stock,

Had meaning, well worth poet's pains to
state,
Should life prove half true life's term, —
death, the rest.
As for the other question, late so large
Now all at once so little, — he or I,
Which better comprehended playwright
craft, —
There, too, old admonition took fresh
point.
As clear recurred our last word-interchange
Two years since, when I tried with
'Ploutos.' 'Vain!'
10 Saluted me the cold grave-bearded bard —
'Vain, this late trial, Aristophanes!
None baulks the genius with impunity!
You know what kind's the nobler, what
makes grave
Or what makes grin; there's yet a nobler
still,
Possibly, — what makes wise, not grave, —
and glad,
Not grinning: whereby laughter joins with
tears,
Tragic and Comic Poet prove one power,
And Aristophanes becomes our Fourth —
Nay, greatest! Never needs the Art stand
still,
20 But those Art leans on lag, and none like
you,
Her strongest of supports, whose step aside
Undoes the march: defection checks
advance
Too late adventured! See the "Ploutos"
here!
This step decides your foot from old to
new —
Proves you relinquish song and dance and
jest,
Discard the beast, and, rising from all-
fours,
Fain would paint, manlike, actual human
life,
Make veritable men think, say and do.
Here's the conception: which to execute,
30 Where's the force? Spent! Ere the race
began, was breath:
O' the runner squandered on each friendly
fool —
Wit-fireworks fizzed off while day craved
no flame:
How should the night receive her due of fire
Flared out in Wasps and Horses, Clouds
and Birds,
Prodigiously a-crackle? Rest content!
The new adventure for the novel man
Born to that next success myself foresee
In right of where I reach before I rest.
At end of a long course, straight all the way,
Well may there tremble somewhat into ken
40 The untrod path, clouds veiled from earlier
gaze!
None may live two lives: I have lived mine
through,

Die where I first stand still. You retro-
grade.
I leave my life's work. I compete with
you,
My last with your last, my Antiope —
Phoinissai — with this Ploutos? No, I
think!
Ever shall great and awful Victory
Accompany my life — in Maketis
If not Athenai. Take my farewell,
friend!
Friend, — for from no consummate ex- 50
cellence
Like yours, whatever fault may counter-
vail,
Do I profess estrangement: murk the
marsh,
Yet where a solitary marble block
Blanches the gloom, there let the eagle
perch!
You show — what splinters of Pentelikos,
Islanded by what ordure! Eagles fly,
Rest on the right place, thence depart as
free;
But 'ware man's footstep, would it traverse
mire
Untainted! Mire is safe for worms that
crawl.'
"Balaustion! Here are very many words, 60
All to portray one moment's rush of
thought, —
And much they do it! Still, you under-
stand.
The Archon, the Feast-master, read their
sum
And substance, judged the banquet-glow
extinct,
So rose, discreetly if abruptly, crowned
The parting cup, — 'To the Good Genius
then!'
"Up starts young Strattis for a final flash:
'Ay the Good Genius! To the Comic
Muse,
She who evolves superiority,
Triumph and joy from sorrow, unsuccess 70
And all that's incomplete in human life;
Who proves such actual failure transient
wrong,
Since out of body uncouth, halt and
maimed —
Since out of soul grotesque, corrupt or
blank —
Fancy, uplifted by the Muse, can flit
To soul and body, reinstate them Man:
Beside which perfect man, how clear we
see
Divergency from type was earth's effect!
Escaping whence by laughter, — Fancy's
feat, —
We right man's wrong, establish true for 80
false, —
Above misshapen body, uncouth soul,

Reach the fine form, the clear intelligence —

Above unseemliness, reach decent law, —
By laughter: attestation of the Muse
That low-and-ugsome is not signed and sealed

Incontrovertibly man's portion here,
Or, if here, — why, still high-and-fair exists

In that ethereal realm where laughs our soul

Lift by the Muse. Hail thou her ministrant!

Hail who accepted no deformity

10 In man as normal and remediless,
But rather pushed it to such gross extreme
That, outraged, we protest by eye's recoil
The opposite proves somewhere rule and law!

Hail who implied, by limning Lamachos,
Plenty and pastime wait on peace, not war!

Philokleon — better bear a wrong than plead,

Play the litigious fool to stuff the mouth
Of dikast with the due three-obol fee!

The Paphlagonian — stick to the old sway
20 Of few and wise, not rabble-government!

Trugaïos, Pisthetairos, Strepsiades, —
Why multiply examples? Hail, in fine,
The hero of each painted monster — so
Suggesting the unpictured perfect shape!
Pour out! A laugh to Aristophanes!

"Stay, my fine Strattis" — and I stopped applause —

"To the Good Genius — but the Tragic Muse!

She who instructs her poet, bids man's soul

Play man's part merely nor attempt the gods'

30 Ill-guessed of! Task humanity to height,
Put passion to prime use, urge will, unshamed

When will's last effort breaks in impotence!

No power forego, elude: no weakness, — plied

Fairly by power and will, — renounce, deny!

Acknowledge, in such miscalled weakness strength

Latent: and substitute thus things for words!

Make man run life's race fairly, — legs and feet,

Craving no false wings to o'erfly its length!

Trust on, trust ever, trust to end — in truth!

40 By truth of extreme passion, utmost will,
Shame back all false display of either force —

Barrier about such strenuous heat and glow,
That cowardice shall shirk contending, — cant,

Pretension, shrivel at truth's first approach!

Pour to the Tragic Muse's ministrant
Who, as he pictured pure Hippolotos,
Abolished our earth's blot Ariphraides;
Who, as he drew Bellerophon the bold,
Proclaimed Kleonumos incredible;
Who, as his Theseus towered up man once 50
more,

Made Alkibiades shrink boy again!

A tear — no woman's tribute, weak exchange

For action, water spent and heart's-blood saved —

No man's regret for greatness gone, ungraced

Perchance by even that poor meed, man's praise —

But some god's superabundance of desire,
Yearning of will to 'scape necessity, —

Love's overbrimming for self-sacrifice,
Whence good might be, which never else may be,

By power displayed, forbidden this strait 60
sphere, —

Effort expressible one only way —
Such tear from me fall to Euripides!"

The Thasian! — All, the Thasian, I account!

Whereupon outburst the whole company
Into applause and — laughter, would you think?

"The unrivalled one! How, never at a loss,

He turns the Tragic on its Comic side
Else imperceptible! Here's death itself —

Death of a rival, of an enemy, —
Scarce seen as Comic till the master-touch 70

Made it acknowledge Aristophanes!
Lo, that Euripidean laurel-tree

Struck to the heart by lightning! Sokrates
Would question us, with buzz of how and why,

Wherefore the berry's virtue, the bloom's vice,

Till we all wished him quiet with his friend;

Agathon would compose an elegy,
Lyric bewailment fit to move a stone,

And, stones responsive, we might wince 'tis like;

Nay, with most cause of all to weep the 80
least,

Sophokles ordains mourning for his sake
While we confess to a remorseful twinge: —

Suddenly, who but Aristophanes,
Prompt to the rescue, puts forth solemn hand,

Singles us out the tragic tree's best branch,

Persuades it groundward and, at tip,
appends,
For votive-visor, Faun's goat-grinning face!
Back it flies, evermore with jest a-top,
And we recover the true mood, and
laugh!"

"I felt as when some Nikias, — ninny-like
Troubled by sunspot-portent, moon-
eclipse, —

At fault a little, sees no choice but sound
Retreat from foe-man; and his troops
mistake

The signal, and hail onset in the blast,
10 And at their joyous answer, *alalé*,
Back the old courage brings the scattered
wits;

He wonders what his doubt meant, quick
confirms

The happy error, blows the charge amain.
So I repaired things.

"Both be praised" thanked I.

"You who have laughed with Aris-
tophanes,

You who wept rather with the Lord of
Tears!

Priest, do thou, president alike o'er each,
Tragic and Comic function of the god,
Help with libation to the blended twain!

20 Either of which who serving, only serves —
Proclaims himself disqualified to pour

To that Good Genius — complex Poetry,
Uniting each god-grace, including both:

Which, operant for body as for soul,
Masters alike the laughter and the tears,

Supreme in lowliest earth, sublimest sky.
Who dares disjoin these, — whether he

ignores

Body or soul, whichever half destroys, —
Maims the else perfect manhood, perpe-
trates

30 Again the inexpiable crime we curse —
Hacks at the Hermai, halves each guardian
shape

Combining, nowise vainly, prominence
Of august head and enthroned intellect,

With homelier symbol of asserted sense, —
Nature's prime impulse, earthly appetite.

For, when our folly ventures on the freak,
Would fain abolish joy and fruitfulness,

Mutilate nature — what avails the Head
Left solitarily predominant, —

40 Unbodied soul, — not Hermes, both in
one?

I, no more than our City, acquiesce
In such a desecration, but defend

Man's double nature — ay, wert thou its foe!
Could I once more, thou cold Euripides,

Encounter thee, in nought would I abate
My warfare, nor subdue my worst attack

On thee whose life-work preached 'Raise
soul, sink sense!

Evirate Hermes!" — would avenge the god,

And justify myself. Once face to face,
Thou, the argute and tricky, shouldst not 50
wrap,

As thine old fashion was, in silent scorn
The breast that quickened at the sting of
truth,

Nor turn from me, as, if the tale be true,
From Lais when she met thee in thy walks,
And questioned why she had no rights as
thou:

Not so shouldst thou betake thee, be
assured,

To book and pencil, deign me no reply!
I would extract an answer from those lips

So closed and cold, were mine the garden-
chance!

Gone from the world! Does none remain 60
to take

Thy part and ply me with thy sophist-skill?
No sun makes proof of his whole potency

For gold and purple in that orb we view:
The apparent orb does little but leave blind

The audacious, and confused the wor-
shipping;

But, close on orb's departure, must succeed
The serviceable cloud, — must intervene,

Induce expenditure of rose and blue,
Reveal what lay in him was lost to us.

So, friends, what hinders, as we homeward 70
go,

If, privileged by triumph gained to-day,
We clasp that cloud our sun left saturate,

The Rhodian rcsy with Euripides?
Not of my audience on my triumph-day,

She nor her husband! After the night's news
Neither will sleep but watch; I know the

mood.

Accompany! my crown declares my right!
And heré you stand with those warm

golden eyes!

"In honest language, I am scarce too sure
Whether I really felt, indeed expressed 80

Then, in that presence, things I now re-
peat:

Nor half, nor any one word, — will that
do?

May be, such eyes must strike conviction,
turn

One's nature bottom upwards, show the
base —

The live rock latent under wave and foam:
Superimposure these! Yet solid stuff

Will ever and anon, obeying star,
(And what star reaches rock-nerve like an

eye?)

Swim up to surface, spout or mud or flame,
And find no more to do than sink as fast. 90

"Anyhow, I have followed happily
The impulse, pledged my Genius with

effect,
Since, come to see you, I am shown —
myself!"

I answered:

"One of us declared for both
'Welcome the glory of Aristophanes.'
The other adds: and, — if that glory
last,
Nor marsh-born vapour creep to veil the
same, —

Once entered, share in our solemnity!
Commemorate, as we, Euripides!"

"What?" he looked round, "I darken the
bright house?
Profane the temple of your deity?
That's true! Else wherefore does he stand
portrayed?"

30 What, Rhodian paint and pencil saved so
much,

Beard, freckled face, brow — all but
breath, I hope!

Come, that's unfair: myself am somebody,
Yet my pictorial fame's just potter's-
work, —

I merely figure on men's drinking-mugs!
I and the Flat-nose, Sophroniskos' son,
Oft make a pair. But what's this lies
below?

His table-book and graver, playwright's
tool!

And lo, the sweet psalterion, strung and
screwed,

Whereon he tried those *le-ê-ê-ê-ês*
20 And *ke-ê-ê-ê-ês* and turns and trills,
Lovely lark's *tirra-lirra*, lad's delight!
Aischulos' bronze-throat eagle-bark at
blood

Has somehow spoiled my taste for twitter-
ings!

With . . . what, and did he leave you
'Herakles'?

The 'Frenzied Hero,' one unfractured
sheet,

No pine-wood tablets smeared with
treacherous wax —

Papuros perfect as e'er tempted pen!

This sacred twist of bay-leaves dead and
sere

Must be that crown the fine work failed to
catch, —

30 No wonder! This might crown 'Antiope.'
'Herakles' triumph? In your heart per-
haps!

But elsewhere? Come now, I'll explain
the case,

Show you the main mistake. Give me the
sheet!"

I interrupted:

"Aristophanes!

The stranger-woman sues in her abode —
'Be honoured as our guest!' But, call
it — shrine,

Then 'No dishonour to the Daimon!' bids

The priestess, 'or expect dishonour's
due!"

You enter fresh from your worst infamy,
Last instance of long outrage; yet I pause, 46
Withhold the word a-tremble on my lip,
Incline me, rather, yearn to reverence, —
So you but suffer that I see the blaze
And not the bolt, — the splendid fancy-
fling,

Not the cold iron malice, the launched lie
Whence heavenly fire has withered; im-
potent,

Yet execrable, leave it 'neath the look
Of yon impassive presence! What he
scorned,

His life long, need I touch, offend my foot,
To prove that malice missed its mark, that 50
lie

Cumbers the ground, returns to whence it
came?

I marvel, I deplore, — the rest be mute!
But, throw off hate's celestuality, —

Show me, apart from song-flash and wit-
flame,

A mere man's hand ignobly clenched
against

Yon supreme calmness, — and I interpose,
Such as you see me! Silk breaks light-
ning's blow!"

He seemed to scarce so much as notice me,
Aught had I spoken, save the final phrase:
Arrested there. 60

"Euripides grown calm!
Calmness supreme means dead and there-
fore safe,"

He muttered; then more audibly began —

"Dead! Such must die! Could people
comprehend!

There's the unfairness of it! So obtuse
Are all: from Solon downward with his
saw

'Let none revile the dead, — no, though
the son,

Nay, far descendant, should revile thy-
self!' —

To him who made Elektra, in the act
Of wreaking vengeance on her worst of
foes,

Scruple to blame, since speech that blames 7
insults

Too much the very villain life-released.

Now, I say, only after death, begins

That formidable claim, — immunity

Of faultiness from fault's due punish-
ment!

The living, who defame me, — why, they
live:

Fools, — I best prove them foolish by their
life,

Will they but work on, lay their work by
mine,

And wait a little, one Olympiad, say!
Then — where's the vital force, mine froze
beside?

The sturdy fibre, shamed my brittle stuff?
The school-correctness, sure of wise award
When my vagaries cease to tickle taste?
Where's censure that must sink me,
judgment big

Awaiting just the word posterity
Pants to pronounce? Time's wave breaks,
buries — *whom*,

Fools, when myself confronts you four
years hence?

10 But die, ere next Lenaia, — safely so
You 'scape me, slink with all your ignorance,

Stupidity and malice, to that hole
O'er which survivors croak 'Respect the
dead!'

Ay, for I needs must! But allow me clutch
Only a carrion-handful, lend it sense,
(Mine, not its own, or could it answer me?)
And question, 'You, I pluck from hiding-
place,

Whose cant was, certain years ago, my
'Clouds'

Might last until the swallows came with
Spring —

20 Whose chatter, 'Birds' are unintelligible,
Mere psychologic puzzling: poetry?

List, the true lay to rock a cradle with!
O man of Mitulene, wondrous wise!

— Would not I rub each face in its own filth
To tune of 'Now that years have come and
gone,

How does the fact stand? What's demon-
strable

By time, that tries things? — your own
test, not mine

Who think men are, were, ever will be
fools,

Though somehow fools confute fools, —
as these, you!

30 Don't mumble to the sheepish twos and
threes

You cornered and called 'audience'!
Face this *me*

Who know, and can, and — helped by fifty
years —

Do pulverise you pygmies, then as now!

"Ay, now as then, I pulverise the brood,
Balaustion! Mindful, from the first,
where foe

Would hide head safe when hand had flung
its stone,

I did not turn cheek and take pleasantry,
But flogged while skin could purple and
flesh start,

To teach fools whom they tried conclusions
with.

40 First face a-splutter at me got such splotch
Of prompt slab mud as, filling mouth to
maw,

Made its concern thenceforward not so
much

To criticise me as go cleanse itself.

The only drawback to which huge de-
light, —

(He saw it, how he saw it, that calm cold
Sagacity you call Euripides!)

— Why, 'tis that, make a muckheap of a
man,

There, pillared by your prowess, he re-
mains,

Immortally immerded. Not so he!
Men pelted him but got no pellet back.

50 He reasoned, I'll engage, — 'Acquaint
the world

Certain minuteness butted at my knee?
Dogface Eruxis, the small satirist, —

What better would the manikin desire
Than to strut forth on tiptoe, notable

As who, so far up, fouled me in the flank?'
So dealt he with the dwarfs: we giants, too,

Why must we emulate their pin-point play?
Render imperishable — impotence,

For mud throw mountains? Zeus, by 60
mud unreached, —

Well, 'twas no dwarf he heaved Olumpos
at!"

My heart burned up within me to my
tongue.

"And why must men remember, ages
hence,

Who it was rolled down rocks, but refuse
too —

Strattis might steal from! mixture-monu-
ment,

Recording what? 'I, Aristophanes,
Who boast me much inventive in my art,

Against Euripides thus volleyed muck
Because, in art, he too extended bounds.

70 I — patriot, loving peace and hating
war, —

Choosing the rule of few, but wise and good,
Rather than mob-dictature, fools and

knaves
However multiplied their mastery, —

Despising most of all the demagogue,
(Noisome air-bubble, buoyed up, borne

along
By kindred breath of knave and fool below,

Whose hearts swell proudly as each puffing
face

Grows big, reflected in that glassy ball,
Vacuity, just bellied out to break

And righteously bespatter friends the 80
first) —

I loathing, — beyond less puissant speech
Than my own god-grand language to

declare, —
The fawning, cozenage and calumny

Wherewith such favourite feeds the popu-
lace

That fan and set him flying for reward: —

I who, detecting what vice underlies
Thought's superstructure, — fancy's
sludge and slime
'Twixt fact's sound floor and thought's
mere surface-growth
Of hopes and fears which root no deeper
down
Than where all such mere fungi breed and
bloat —
Namely, man's misconception of the
God: —
I, loving, hating, wishful from my soul
That truth should triumph, falsehood have
defeat,
— Why, all my soul's supremacy of power
10 Did I pour out in volley just on him
Who, his whole life long, championed
every cause
I called my heart's cause, loving as I
loved,
Hating my hates, spurned falsehood,
championed truth, —
Championed truth not by flagellating foe
With simple rose and lily, gibe and jeer,
Sly wink of boon-companion o'er his bowze
Who, while he blames the liquor, smacks
the lip,
Blames, doubtless, but leers condonation
too, —
No, the balled fist broke brow like thunder-
bolt,
20 Battered till brain flew! Seeing which
descent,
None questioned that was first acquaint-
ance-ship,
The avenger's with the vice he crashed
through bone.
Still, he displeased me; and I turned from
foe
To fellow-fighter, flung much stone, more
mud, —
But missed him, since he lives aloof, I see.
Pah! stop more shame, deep-cutting glory
through,
Nor add, this poet, learned, — found no
taunt
Tell like 'That other poet studies books!'
Wise, — cried 'At each attempt to move
our hearts,
30 He uses the mere phrase of daily life!'
Witty, — 'His mother was a herb-woman!'
Veracious, honest, loyal, fair and good, —
'It was Kephisophon who helped him
write!'
"Whence, — O the tragic end of com-
edy! —
Balaustion pities Aristophanes.
For, who believed him? Those who
laughed so loud?
They heard him call the sun Sicilian
cheese!
Had he called true cheese — curd, would
muscle move?

What made them laugh but the enormous
lie?
'Kephisophon wrote Herakles? ha, ha, 40
What can have stirred the wine-dregs,
souring the soul
And set a-lying Aristophanes?
Some accident at which he took offence!
The Tragic Master in a moody muse
Passed him unhailing, and it hurts — it
hurts!
Beside, there's licence for the Wine-lees-
song!'"

Blood burnt the cheek-bone, each black
eye flashed fierce.

"But this exceeds our licence! Stay
awhile —
That's the solution! both are foreigners,
The fresh-come Rhodian lady and her 50
spouse
The man of Phokis: newly resident,
Nowise instructed — that explains it all!
No born and bred Athenian but would
smile,
Unless frown seemed more fit for igno-
rance.
These strangers have a privilege!

"You blame"
(Presently he resumed with milder mien)
"Both theory and practice — Comedy:
Blame her from altitudes the Tragic
friend
Rose to, and upraised friends along with
him,
No matter how. Once there, all's cold
and fine,
Passionless, rational; our world beneath
Shows (should you condescend to grace so
much
As glance at poor Athenai) grimly gross —
A population which, mere flesh and blood,
Eats, drinks and kisses, falls to fisticuffs,
Then hugs as hugely: speaks too as it acts,
Prodigiously talks nonsense, — townsmen
needs
Must parley in their town's vernacular.
Such world has, of two courses, one to
choose:
Unworld itself, — or else go blackening off 7
To its crow-kindred, leave philosophy
Her heights serene, fit perch for owls like
you.
Now, since the world demurs to either
course,
Permit me, — in default of boy or girl,
So they be reared Athenian, good and
true, —
To praise what you most blame! Hear
Art's defence!
I'll prove our institution, Comedy,
Coëval with the birth of freedom, matched
So nice with our Republic, that its growth

Measures each greatness, just as its decline
Would signalise the downfall of the pair.
Our Art began when Bacchos . . . never
mind!

You and your master don't acknowledge
gods:

'They are not, no, they are not!' well, —
began

When the rude instinct of our race out-
spoke,

Found, — on recurrence of festivity
Occasioned by black mother-earth's good
will

To children, as they took her vintage-
gifts, —

10 Found — not the least of many benefits —
That wine unlocked the stiffest lip, and
loosed

The tongue late dry and reticent of joke,
Through custom's gripe which gladness
thrusts aside.

So, emulating liberalities,
Heaven joined with earth for that god's day
at least,

Renewed man's privilege, grown obsolete,
Of telling truth nor dreading punishment.
Whereon the joyous band disguised their
forms

With skins, beast-fashion, daubed each
phyz with dregs,

20 Then hollaed 'Neighbour, you are fool,
you — knave,

You — hard to serve, you — stingy to
reward!

The guiltless crowed, the guilty sunk their
crest,

And good folk gained thereby, 'twas evi-
dent.

Whence, by degrees, a birth of happier
thought,

The notion came — not simply this to say,
But this to do — prove, put in evidence,

And act the fool, the knave, the harsh, the
hunks,

Who *did* prate, cheat, shake fist, draw
purse-string tight,

As crowd might see, which only heard
before.

30 "So played the Poet, with his man of
parts;

And all the others, found unqualified
To mount cart and be persons, made the
mob,

Joined choros, fortified their fellows' fun,
Anticipated the community,

Gave judgment which the public ratified.
Suiting rough weapon doubtless to plain
truth,

They flung, for word-artillery, why —
filth;

Still, folk who wiped the unsavoury salute
From visage, would prefer the mess to
wit —

Steel, poked through midriff with a civil 40
speech,

As now the way is: then, the kindlier
mode

Was — drub not stab, ribroast not scarify!
So did Sousarion introduce, and so

Did I, acceding, find the Comic Art:
Club, — if I call it, — notice what's
implied!

An engine proper for rough chastisement,
No downright slaying: with impunity —
Provided crabtree, steeped in oily joke,
Deal only such a bruise as laughter cures.
I kept the gained advantage: stickled 50
still

For club-law — stout fun and allowanced
thumps:

Knocked in each knob a crevice to hold
joke

As fig-leaf holds the fat-fry.

"Next, whom thrash?

Only the coarse fool and the clownish
knave?

Higher, more artificial, composite
Offence should prove my prowess, eye and
arm!

Not who robs henroost, tells of untaxed
figs,

Spends all his substance on stewed ellops-
fish,

Or gives a pheasant to his neighbour's
wife:

No! strike malpractice that affects the 60
State,

The common weal — intriguer or poltroon,
Venality, corruption, what care I

If shrewd or witless merely? — so the thing
Lay sap to aught that made Athenai bright

And happy, change her customs, lead
astray

Youth or age, play the demagogue at Pnux,
The sophist in Palaistra, or — what's
worst,

As widest mischief, — from the Theatre
Preach innovation, bring contempt on
oaths,

Adorn licentiousness, despise the Cult 70

Are such to be my game? Why, then there
wants

Quite other cunning than a cudgel-sweep!
Grasp the old stout stock, but new tip with
steel

Each boss, if I would bray — no callous
hide

Simply, but Lamachos in coat of proof,
Or Kleon cased about with impudence!

Shaft pushed no worse while point pierced
sparkling so

That none smiled 'Sportive, what seems
savagest,

— Innocuous anger, spiteless rustic mirth!
Yet spiteless in a sort, considered well, 80

Since I pursued my warfare till each wound

Went through the mere man, reached the principle

Worth purging from Athenai. Lamachos? No, I attacked war's representative; Kleon? No, flattery of the populace; Sokrates? No, but that pernicious seed Of sophists whereby hopeful youth is taught

To jabber argument, chop logic, pore On sun and moon, and worship Whirligig: O your tragedian, with the lofty grace,
10 Aims at no other and effects as much? Candidly: what's a polished period worth, Filed curt sententiousness of loaded line, When he who deals out doctrine, primly steps

From just that selfsame moon he maunders of,

And, blood-thinned by his pallid nutriment,

Proposes to rich earth-blood — purity?

In me, 'twas equal-balanced flesh rebuked Excess alike in stuff-guts Glauketes Or starveling Chairephon; I challenged both, —

20 Strong understander of our common life, I urged sustinment of humanity.

Whereas when your tragedian cries up Peace —

He's silent as to cheesecakes Peace may chew;

Seeing through rabble-rule, he shuts his eye To what were better done than crowding Pnux —

That's — dance 'Threttanelo, the Kuklops drunk!'

"My power has hardly need to vaunt itself! Opposers peep and mutter, or speak plain:

30 "No naming names in Comedy!" votes one, "Nor villifying live folk!" legislates

Another, "urge amendment on the dead!" "Don't throw away hard cash," supplies a third,

'But crib from actor's dresses, choros-treats!'

Then Kleon did his best to bully me:

Called me before the Law Court: 'Such a play

Satirised citizens with strangers there, Such other,' — why, its fault was in myself!

I was, this time, the stranger, privileged To act no play at all, — Egyptian, I —

40 Rhodian or Kameirensian, Aiginete, Lindian, or any foreigner he liked —

Because I can't write Attic, probably!

Go ask my rivals, — how they roughed my fleece,

And how, shorn pink themselves, the huddled sheep

Shiver at distance from the snapping shears!

Why must thy needs provoke me?

"All the same,

No matter for my triumph, I foretell Subsidence of the day-star: quench his beams

No Aias e'er was equal to the feat By throw of shield, tough-hided seven times 50 seven,

'Twixt sky and earth! 'tis dullards soft and sure

Who breathe against his brightest, here a sigh

And there a 'So let be, we pardon you!' Till the minute mist hangs a block, has tamed

Noonblaze to 'twilight mild and equable,' Vote the old women spinning out of doors.

Give me the earth-spasm, when the lion ramped

And the bull gendered in the brave gold flare!

O you shall have amusement, — better still,

Instruction! no more horse-play, naming 60 names,

Taxing the fancy when plain sense will serve!

Thearion,¹ now, my friend who bakes you bread,

What's worthier limning than his household life?

His whims and ways; his quarrels with the spouse,

And how the son, instead of learning knead

Kilikian loaves, brings heart-break on his sire

By buying horseflesh branded *Sun*, each flank,

From shrewd Menippos who imports the ware:

While pretty daughter Kepphé too much haunts

The shop of Sporgilos the barber! brave! 70 Out with Thearion's meal-tub politics

In lieu of Pisthetairos, Strepsiades! That's your exchange? O Muse of Meg-

ara!

Advise the fools 'Feed babe on weasel-lap For wild-boar's marrow, Cheiron's hero-

pap, And rear for man — Aripkrades, may-hap!'

Yes, my Balaustion, yes, my Euthukles, That's your exchange, — who, foreigners

in fact

And fancy, would impose your squeamishness

On sturdy health, and substitute such 80 brat

For the right offspring of us Rocky Ones,² Because babe kicks the cradle, — crows,

not mewls!

¹ A baker.

² Athenians.

'Which brings me to the prime fault,
poison-speck

Whence all the plague springs — that first
feud of all

'Twixt me and you and your Euripides.

'Unworld the world,' frowns he, my oppo-
site.

I cry, 'Life!' 'Death,' he groans, 'our
better Life!'

Despise what is — the good and graspable,
Prefer the out of sight and in at mind,
To village-joy, the well-side violet-patch,
The jolly club-feast when our field's in
soak,

10 Roast thrushes, hare-soup, pea-soup, deep
washed down

With Peparethian; the prompt paying off
That black-eyed brown-skinned country-
flavoured wench

We caught among our brushwood foraging:
On these look fig-juice, curdle up life's
cream,

And fall to magnifying misery!
Or, if you condescend to happiness,
Why, talk, talk, talk about the empty
name

While thing's self lies neglected 'neath
your nose!

I need particular discourtesy

60 And private insult from Euripides

To render contest with him credible?

Say, all of me is outraged! one stretched
sense,

I represent the whole Republic, — gods,
Heroes, priests, legislators, poets, — prone,
And pummelled into insignificance,

If will in him were matched with power of
stroke.

For see what he has changed or hoped to
change!

How few years since, when he began the
fight,

Did there beat life indeed Athenai through!

30 Plenty and peace, then! Hellas thunder-
smote

The Persian. He himself had birth, you
say,

That morn salvation broke at Salamis,
And heroes still walked earth. Themis-
tokles —

Surely his mere back-stretch of hand
could still

Find, not so lost in dark, Odusseus? — he
Holding as surely on to Herakles, —

Who touched Zeus, link by link, the unrup-
tured chain!

Were poets absent? Aischulos might
hail —

With Pindaros, Theognis, — whom for
sire?

40 Homeros' self, departed yesterday!

While Hellas, saved and sung to, then and
thus, —

Ah, people, — ah, lost antique liberty!

We lived, ourselves, undoubted lords of
earth:

Wherever olives flourish, corn yields crop
To constitute our title — ours such land!
Outside of oil and breadstuff, — barbarism!
What need of conquest? Let barbarians
starve!

Devote our whole strength to our sole
defence,

Content with peerless native products,
home,

Beauty profuse in earth's mere sights and 50
sounds,

Such men, such women, and such gods
their guard!

The gods? he worshipped best who feared
them most,

And left their nature uninquied into,
— Nature? their very names! pay rever-
ence,

Do sacrifice for our part, theirs would be
To prove benignantest of playfellows.

With kindly humanism they countenanced
Our emulation of divine escapes

Through sense and soul: soul, sense are
made to use;

Use each, acknowledging its god the while! 60
Crush grape, dance, drink, indulge, for
Bacchos' sake!

'Tis Aphrodité's feast-day — frisk and
fling,

Provided we observe our oaths, and house
Duly the stranger: Zeus takes umbrage

else!

Ah, the great time — had I been there to
taste!

Perikles, right Olumpian, — occupied
As yet with getting an Olumpus reared

Marble and gold above Akropolis,
Wisely so spends what thrifty fools amassed

For cut-throat projects. Who carves Pro- 70
machos?!

Who writes the Oresteia?

"Ah, the time!

For, all at once, a cloud has blanched the
blue,

A cold wind creeps through the close vine-
yard-rank,

The olive-leaves curl, violets crisp and
close

Like a nymph's wrinkling at the bath's first
splash

On breast. (Your pardon!) There's a
restless change,

Deterioration. Larks and nightingales
Are silenced, here and there a gor-crow

grim

Flaps past, as scenting opportunity.

Where Kimon passaged to the Boulé once, 80
A starveling crew, unkempt, unshorn, un-
washed,

! A famous bronze statue in Athens of *Athene*
Promachos, visible from afar.

Occupy altar-base and temple-step,
Are minded to indoctrinate our youth!
How call these carrion kill-joys that intrude?
'Wise men,' their nomenclature! Prodikos —
Who scarce could, unassisted, pick his steps
From way Theseia to the Tripods' way, —
This empty noddle comprehends the sun, —
How he's Aigina's bigness, wheels no whit
His way from east to west, nor wants a steed!
10 And here's Protagoras sets wrongheads right,
Explains what virtue, vice, truth, falsehood mean,
Makes all we seem to know prove ignorance
Yet knowledge also, since, on either side
Of any question, something is to say,
Nothing to 'stablish, all things to disturb!
And shall youth go and play at kottabos,
Leaving unsettled whether moon-spots breed?
Or dare keep Choes ere the problem's solved —
Why should I like my wife who dislikes me?
15 'But sure the gods permit this, censure that?'
So tell them! straight the answer's in your teeth:
'You relegate these points, then, to the gods?
What and where are they?' What my sire supposed,
And where yon cloud conceals them!
'Till they 'scape
And scramble down to Leda, as a swan,
Europa, as a bull! why not as — ass
To somebody? Your sire was Zeus perhaps!
Either — away with such ineptitude!
Or, wanting energy to break your bonds,
20 Stick to the good old stories, think the rain
Is — Zeus distilling pickle through a sieve!
Think thunder's thrown to break Theoros' head
For breaking oaths first! Meanwhile let ourselves
Instruct your progeny you prate like fools
Of father Zeus, who's but the atmosphere,
Brother Poseidon, otherwise called — sea,
And son Hephaistos — fire and nothing else!
Over which nothings there's a something still,
'Necessity,' that rules the universe
40 And cares as much about your Choes-feast
Performed or intermitted, as you care
Whether gnats sound their trump from head or tail!
When, stupefied at such philosophy,

We cry — Arrest the madmen, governor!
Pound hemlock and pour bull's-blood,
Perikles! —
Would you believe? The Olumpian
bends his brow,
Scarce pauses from his building! 'Say they thus?
Then, they say wisely. Anaxagoras,
I had not known how simple proves eclipse
But for thy teaching! Go, fools, learn like me!
'Well, Zeus nods: man must reconcile himself,
So, let the Charon's-company harangue,
And Anaxagoras be — as we wish!
A comfort is in nature: while grass grows
And water runs, and sesame pricks tongue,
And honey from Brilesian hollow melts
On mouth, and Bacchis' flavorful lip beats both,
You will not be untaught life's use, young man?
Pho! My young man just proves that panniered ass
Said to have borne Youth strapped on his 60
stout back,
With whom a serpent bargained, bade him swap
The priceless boon for — water to quench thirst!
What's youth to my young man? In love with age,
He Spartanizes, argues, fasts and frowns,
Denies the plainest rules of life, long since
Proved sound; sets all authority aside,
Must simply recommence things, learn ere act,
And think out thoroughly how youth should pass —
Just as if youth stops passing, all the same!
'One last resource is left us — poetry! 70
Vindicate nature, prove Plataian help,
Turn out, a thousand strong, all right and tight,
To save Sense, poet! Bang the sophist-brood
Would cheat man out of wholesome sustenance
By swearing wine is water, honey — gall,
Saperdion! — the Empousa! 2. Panic-smit,
Our juveniles abstain from Sense and starve:
Be yours to disenchant them! Change things back!
Or better, strain a point the other way
And handsomely exaggerate wronged 80
truth!
Lend wine a glory never gained from grape,

* A famous beauty.

* A horror — a ghoul.

Help honey with a snatch of him we style
The Muses' Bee, bay-bloom-fed Sopho-
kles,
And give Saperdion a Kimberic robe!

"I, his successor,' gruff the answer grunts,
'Incline to poetise philosophy,
Extend it rather than restrain; as thus —
Are heroes men? No more, and scarce as
much,
Shall mine be represented. Are men
poor?
Behold them ragged, sick, lame, halt and
blind!
10 Do they use speech? Ay, street-terms,
market-phrase!
Having thus drawn sky earthwards, what
comes next
But dare the opposite, lift earth to sky?
Mere puppets once, I now make woman-
kind.
For thinking, saying, doing, match the
male.
Lift earth? I drop to, dally with, earth's
dung!
— Recognise in the very slave — man's
mate,
Declare him brave and honest, kind and
true,
And reasonable as his lord, in brief.
I paint men as they are — so runs my
boast —
20 Not as they should be: paint — what's
part of man
— Women and slaves — not as, to please
your pride,
They should be, but your equals, as they
are.
O and the Gods! Instead of abject mien,
Submissive whisper, while my Choros cants
"Zeus, — with thy cubit's length of attri-
butes, —
May I, the ephemeral, ne'er scrutinise
Who made the heaven and earth and all
things there!"
Myself shall say' . . . Ay, Herakles may
help!
Give me, — I want the very words, —
attend!"

30 He read. Then "Murder's out, — 'There
are no Gods.'
Man has no master, owns, by consequence,
No right, no wrong, except to please or
plague
His nature: what man likes be man's sole
law!
Still, since he likes Saperdion, honey, figs,
Man may reach freedom by your rounda-
bout.
'Never believe yourselves the freer thence!
There are no gods, but there's "Neces-
sity," —
Duty enjoined you, fact in pigment's place,

Throned on no mountain, native to the
mind!
Therefore deny yourselves Saperdion, figs 40
And honey, for the sake of — what I
dream,
A-sitting with my legs up!"

"Infamy!
The poet casts in calm his lot with these
Assailants of Apollon! Sworn to serve
Each Grace, the Furies call him minister —
He, who was born for just that roseate
world
Renounced so madly, where what's false is
fact,
Where he makes beauty out of ugliness,
Where he lives, life itself disguised for
him
As immortality — so works the spell, 50
The enthusiastic mood which marks a
man
Muse-mad, dream-drunken, wrapt around
by verse,
Encircled with poetic atmosphere,
As lark emballed by its own crystal song,
Or rose enmisted by that scent it makes!
No, this were unreality! the real
He wants, not falsehood, — truth alone he
seeks,
Truth, for all beauty! Beauty, in all
truth
That's certain somehow! Must the eagle
lilt
Lark-like, needs fir-tree blossom rose-like? 60
No!
Strength and utility charm more than
grace,
And what's most ugly proves most beauti-
ful.
So much assistance from Euripides!
"Whereupon I betake me, since needs
must,
To a concluding — 'Go and feed the
crows!
Do! Spoil your art as you renounce your
life,
Poetise your so precious system, do,
Degrade the hero, nullify the god,
Exhibit women, slaves and men as peers, —
Your castigation follows prompt enough! 70
When all's concocted upstairs, heels o'er
head,
Down must submissive drop the master-
piece
For public praise or blame: so, praise
away,
Friend Sokrates, wife's-friend Kephiso-
phon!
Boast innovations, cramp phrase, uncouth
song,
Hard matter and harsh manner, gods,
men, slaves
And women jumbled to a laughing-stock

Which Hellas shall hold sides at lest she
split!
Hellas, on these, shall have her word to
say!

"She has it and she says it — there's the
curse! —

She finds he makes the shag-rag hero-race,
The noble slaves, wise women, move as
much

Pity and terror as true tragic types:
Applauds inventiveness — the plot so new,
The turn and trick subsidiary so strange!
She relishes that homely phrase of life,

1. That common town-talk, more than
trumpet-blasts:

Accords him right to chop and change a
myth:

What better right had he, who told the tale
In the first instance, to embellish fact?

This last may disembellish yet improve!
Both find a block: this man carves back to
bull

What first his predecessor cut to sphynx:
Such genuine actual roarer, nature's brute,
Intelligible to our time, was sure
The old-world artist's purpose, had he
worked

20 To mind; this both means and makes the
thing!

If, past dispute, the verse slips oily-bathed
In unctuous music — say, effeminate —
We also say, like Kuthereia's¹ self,
A lulling effluence which enswathes some
isle

Where hides a nymph, not seen but felt
the more.

That's Hellas' verdict!

"Does Euripides

Even so far absolved, remain content?

Nowise! His task is to refine, refine,
Divide, distinguish, subtilise away

30 Whatever seemed a solid planting-place
For foot-fall, — not in that phantasmal
sphere

Proper to poet, but on vulgar earth
Where people used to tread with confi-
dence.

There's left no longer one plain positive
Enunciation incontestable
Of what is good, right, decent here on
earth.

Nobody now can say 'this plot is mine,
Though but a plethron square,² — my
duty!' — 'Yours?

Mine, or at least not yours,' snaps some-
body!

40 And, whether the dispute be parent-right
Or children's service, husband's privilege
Or wife's submission, there's a snarling
straight,

¹ Name for Venus.

One hundred feet square.

Smart passage of opposing 'yea' and 'nay,'
'Should,' 'should not,' till, howe'er the
contest end,

Spectators go off sighing — Clever thrust!
Why was I so much hurried to pay debt,
Attend my mother, sacrifice an ox,
And set my name down 'for a trireme,
good'?

Something I might have urged on t'other
side!

No doubt, Chresphontes or Bellerophon 50
We don't meet every day; but Stab-and-
stitch

The tailor — ere I turn the drachmas o'er
I owe him for a chiton, as he thinks,
I'll pose the blockhead with an argument!

"So has he triumphed, your Euripides!
Oh, I concede, he rarely gained a prize:
That's quite another matter! cause for
that!

Still, when 'twas got by Ions, Iophons,
Off he would pace confoundedly superb,
Supreme, no smile at movement on his 60
mouth

Till Sokrates winked, whispered: out it
broke!

And Aristullos jotted down the jest,
While Iophons or Ions, bay on brow,
Looked queerly, and the foreigners — like
you —

Asked o'er the border with a puzzled smile
— 'And so, you value Ions, Iophons,
Euphorions! How about Euripides?'
(Eh, brave bard's-champion? Does the
anger boil?

Keep within bounds a moment, — eye and
lip

Shall loose their doom on me, their fiery 70
worst!)

What strangers? Archelaos heads the
file!

He sympathises, he concerns himself,
He pens epistle, each successful play;
'Athenai sinks effete; there's younger
blood

In Makedonia. Visit where I rule!
Do honour to me and take gratitude!
Live the guest's life, or work the poet's way,
Which also means the statesman's: he who
wrote

Erechtheus may seem rawly politic
At home where Kleophon is ripe; but here 80
My council-board permits him choice of
seats.'

"Now this was operating, — what should
prove

A poison-tree, had flowered far on to fruit
For many a year, — when I was moved,
first man,

To dare the adventure, down with root and
branch.

So, from its sheath I drew my Comic steel,

And dared what I am now to justify.
A serious question first, though!

"Once again!

Do you believe, when I aspired in youth,
I made no estimate of power at all,
Nor paused long, nor considered much,
what class

Of fighters I might claim to join, beside
That class wherewith I cast in company?
Say, you — profuse of praise no less than
blame —

Could not I have competed — franker
phrase

10 Might trulier correspond to meaning — still,
Competed with your Tragic paragon?
Suppose me minded simply to make verse,
To fabricate, parade resplendent arms,
Flourish and sparkle out a Trilogy, —
Where was the hindrance? But my soul
bade 'Fight!

Leave flourishing for mock-foe, pleasure-
time;

Prove arms efficient on real heads and
hearts!

How? With degeneracy sapping fast
The Marathonian muscle, nerved of old
20 To maul the Mede, now strung at best to
help

— How did I fable? — War and Hubbub
mash

To mincemeat Fatherland and Brother-
hood,

Pound in their mortar Hellas, State by
State,

That greed might gorge, the while frivolity
Rubbed hands and smacked lips o'er the
dainty dish!

Authority, experience — pushed aside
By any upstart who pleads throng and
press

O' the people! 'Think, say, do thus!'
Wherefore, pray?

'We are the people: who impugns our
right

30 Of choosing Kleon that tans hide so well,
Huperbolos that turns out lamps so trim,
Hemp-seller Eukrates or Lusikles

Sheep-dealer, Kephalos the potter's son,
Diitriphe who weaves the willow-work
To go round bottles, and Nausikudes
The meal-man? Such we choose and
more, their mates,

To think and say and do in our behalf!
While sophistry wagged tongue, embold-
ened still,

10 Found matter to propose, contest, defend,
'Stablish, turn topsy-turvy, — all the same,
No matter what, provided the result
Were something new in place of something
old, —

Set wagging by pure insolence of soul
Which needs must pry into, have warrant for

Each right, each privilege good policy
Protects from curious eye and prating
mouth!

Everywhere lust to shape the world anew,
Spurn this Athenai as we find her, build
A new impossible Clouduckooburg
For feather-headed birds, once solid men, 50
Where rules, discarding jolly habitude,
Nourished on myrtle-berries and stray ants,
King Tereus who, turned Hoopoe Triple-
Crest,
Shall terrify and bring the gods to terms!

"Where was I? Oh! Things ailing thus
— I ask,

What cure? Cut, thrust, hack, hew at
heap-on-heaped

Abomination with the exquisite
Palaistra-tool¹ of polished Tragedy?
Erechtheus shall harangue Amphiktuon,
And incidentally drop word of weight 60

On justice, righteousness, so turn aside
The audience from attacking Sicily! —

The more that Choros, after he recounts
How Phrixos rode the ram, the far-famed

Fleece,
Shall add — at last fall of grave dancing-
foot —

'Agression never yet was helped by Zeus!
That helps or hinders Alkibiades?

As well expect, should Pheidias carve Zeus'
self

And set him up, some half a mile away,
His frown would frighten sparrows from 70

your field!

Eagles may recognise their lord, belike,
But as for vulgar sparrows, — change the
god,

And plant some big Priapos with a pole!
I wield the Comic weapon rather — hate!

Hate! honest, earnest and directest hate —
Warfare wherein I close with enemy,

Call him one name and fifty epithets,
Remind you his great-grandfather sold
bran,

Describe the new exomion, sleeveless coat
He knocked me down last night and robbed 80

me of,

Protest he voted for a tax on air!
And all this hate — if I write Comedy —

Finds tolerance, most like — applause,
perhaps

True veneration; for I praise the god
Present in person of his minister,

And pay — the wilder my extravagance —
The more appropriate worship to the Power

Adulterous, night-roaming, and the rest:
Otherwise, — that originative force

Of nature, impulse stirring death to life, 90
Which, underlying law, seems lawlessness,
Yet is the outbreak which, ere order be

Used in wrestling.

Must thrill creation through, warm stocks
and stones,
Phales Iacchos.

"Comedy for me!

Why not for you, my Tragic masters?
Sneaks

Whose art is mere desertion of a trust!
Such weapons lay to hand, the ready club,
The clay-ball, on the ground a stone to
snatch, —

Arms fit to bruise the boar's neck, break
the chine

O' the wolf, — and you must impiously —
despise?

No, I'll say, furtively let fall that trust
b Consigned you! 'Twas not 'take or
leave alone,'

But 'take and, wielding, recognise your
god

In his prime attributes!' And though full
soon

You sneaked, subsided into poetry,
Nor met your due reward, still, — heroise
And speechify and sing-song and forego
Far as you may your function, — still its
part

Endures, one piece of early homage still
Exacted of you; after your three bouts

At hoitytoity, great men with long words,
20 And so forth, — at the end, must tack itself
The genuine sample, the Satyric Play,
Concession, with its wood-boys' fun and
freak,

To the true taste of the mere multitude.
Yet, there again! What does your Still-
at-itch,

Always-the-innovator? Shrugs and shirks!
Out of his fifty Trilogies, some five

Are somehow suited: Satyrs dance and
sing,

Try merriment, a grimly prank or two,
Sour joke squeezed through pursed lips
and teeth on edge,

30 Then quick on top of toe to pastoral
sport,

Goat-tending and sheep-herding, cheese
and cream,

Soft grass and silver rillets, country-fare —
When throats were promised Thasian!

Five such feats, —
Then frankly off he threw the yoke: next
Droll,

Next festive drama, covenanted fun,
Decent reversion to indecency,

Proved — your 'Alkestis'! There's quite
fun enough,

Herakles drunk! From out fate's blacken-
ing wave

Calamitous, just zigzags some shot star,
40 Poor promise of faint joy, and turns the
laugh

On dupes whose fears and tears were all in
waste!

"For which sufficient reasons, in truth's
name,

I closed with whom you count the Meaner
Muse,

Classed me with Comic Poets who should
weld

Dark with bright metal, show their blade
may keep

Its adamantine birthright though ablaze
With poetry, the gold, and wit, the gem,
And strike mere gold, unstiffened out by
steel,

Or gem, no iron joints its strength around,
From hand of — posturer, not combatant! 56

"Such was my purpose: it succeeds, I say!
Have not we beaten Kallikratidas,

Not humbled Sparté? Peace awaits our
word,

Spite of Theramenes, and fools his like.
Since my previsions, — warranted too well

By the long war now waged and worn to
end —

Had spared such heritage of misery,
My after-counsels scarce need fear repulse.

Athenai, taught prosperity has wings,
Cages the glad recapture. Demos, see, 60

From folly's premature decrepitude
Boiled young again, emerges from the stew

Of twenty-five years' trouble, sits and
sways,

One brilliance and one balsam, — sways
and sits

Monarch of Hellas! ay and, sage again,
No longer jeopardises chieftainship,

No longer loves the brutish demagogue
Appointed by a bestial multitude

But seeks out sound advisers. Who are
they?

Ourselves, of parentage proved wise and 70
good!

To such may hap strains thwarting quality,
(As where shall want its flaw mere human
stuff?)

Still, the right grain is proper to right
race;

What's contrary, call curious accident!
Hold by the usual! Orchard-grafted

tree,
Not wilding, race-horse-sired, not rouncey-
born,

Aristocrat, no sausage-selling snob!
Nay, why not Alkibiades, come back

Filled by the Genius, freed of petulance,
Frailty, — mere youthfulness that's all at 80

fault, —
Advanced to Perikles and something more?

— Being at least our duly born and bred, —
Curse on what chaunoproct¹ first gained

his ear
And got his . . . well, once true man in
right place,

¹ A catamite.

Our commonalty soon content themselves
 With doing just what they are born to do,
 Eat, drink, make merry, mind their own
 affairs
 And leave state-business to the larger brain.
 I do not stickle for their punishment;
 But certain culprits have a cloak to twitch,
 A purse to pay the piper: flog, say I,
 Your fine fantastics, paragons of parts,
 Who choose to play the important! Far
 from side
 With us, their natural supports, allies,—
 And, best by brain, help who are best by
 birth
 To fortify each weak point in the wall
 Built broad and wide and deep for per-
 manence
 Between what's high and low, what's rare
 and vile,—
 They cast their lot perversely in with low
 And vile, lay flat the barrier, lift the mob
 To dizzy heights where Privilege stood
 firm.
 And then, simplicity become conceit,—
 Woman, slave, common soldier, artisan,
 Crazy with new-found worth, new-fangled
 claims,—
 These must be taught next how to use their
 heads
 And hands in driving man's right to mob's
 rule!
 What fellows thus inflame the multitude?
 Your Sokrates, still crying 'Understand!'
 Your Aristullos, — 'Argue!' Last and
 worst,
 Should, by good fortune, mob still hesitate,
 Remember there's degree in heaven and
 earth,
 Cry 'Aischulos enjoined us fear the gods,
 And Sophokles advised respect the kings!'
 Why, your Euripides informs them —
 'Gods?
 They are not! Kings? They are, but
 . . . do not I,
 In Suppliants, make my Theseus, — yours,
 no more, —
 Fire up at insult of who styles him King?
 Play off that Herald, I despise the most,
 As patronising king's prerogative
 Against a Theseus proud to dare no step
 Till he consult the people?'
 "Such as these —
 Ah, you expect I am for strangling straight?
 Nowise, Balaustion! All my roundabout
 Ends at beginning, with my own defence.
 I dose each culprit just with — Comedy.
 Let each be doctored in exact the mode
 Himself prescribes: by words, the word-
 monger —
 My words to his words, — my lies, if you
 like,
 To his lies. Sokrates I nickname thief,
 Quack, necromancer; Aristullos, — say,

Male Kirké who bewitches and bewrays
 And changes folk to swine; Euripides, —
 Well, I acknowledge! Every word is
 false,
 Looked close at; but stand distant and 50
 stare through,
 All's absolute indubitable truth
 Behind lies, truth which only lies declare!
 For come, concede me truth's in thing not
 word,
 Meaning not manner! Love smiles
 'rogue' and 'wretch'
 When 'sweet' and 'dear' seem vapid: Hate
 adopts
 Love's 'sweet' and 'dear' when 'rogue'
 and 'wretch' fall flat:
 Love, Hate — are truths, then, each, in
 sense not sound.
 Further: if Love, remaining Love, fell
 back
 On 'sweet' and 'dear,' — if Hate, though
 Hate the same,
 Dropped down to 'rogue' and 'wretch,' — 60
 each phrase were false.
 Good! and now grant I hate no matter
 whom
 With reason: I must therefore fight my
 foe,
 Finish the mischief which made enmity.
 How? By employing means to most hurt
 him
 Who much harmed me. What way did he
 do harm?
 Through word or deed? Through word?
 with word, wage war!
 Word with myself directly? As direct
 Reply shall follow: word to you, the wise,
 Whence indirectly came the harm to me?
 What wisdom I can muster waits on such. 70
 Word to the populace which, misconceived
 By ignorance and incapacity,
 Ends in no such effect as follows cause
 When I, or you the wise, are reasoned with,
 So damages what I and you hold dear?
 In that event, I ply the populace
 With just such word as leavens their whole
 lump
 To the right ferment for my purpose.
 They
 Arbitrate properly between us both?
 They weigh my answer with his argument, 80
 Match quip with quibble, wit with elo-
 quence?
 All they attain to understand is — blank!
 Two adversaries differ: which is right
 And which is wrong, none takes on him
 to say,
 Since both are unintelligible. Pooh!
 Swear my foe's mother vended herbs she
 stole,
 They fall a-laughing! Add, — his house-
 hold drudge
 Of all-work justifies that office well,
 Kisses the wife, composing him the play, —

They grin at whom they gaped in wonderment,

And go off — 'was he such a sorry scrub?
'This other seems to know! we praised too fast!'

Why then, my lies have done the work of truth,

Since 'scrub,' improper designation, means Exactly what the proper argument

— Had such been comprehensible — proposed

To proper audience — were I graced with such —

Would properly result in; so your friend

10 Gets an impartial verdict on his verse
'The tongue swears, but the soul remains unsworn!'

"There, my Balaustion! All is summed and said.

No other cause of quarrel with yourself!

Euripides and Aristophanes

Differ: he needs must round our difference Into the mob's ear; with the mob I plead.

You angrily start forward 'This to me?' No speck of this on you the thrice refined!

20 Could parley be restricted to us two,
My first of duties were to clear up doubt

As to our true divergence each from each. Does my opinion so diverge from yours?

Probably less than little — not at all! To know a matter, for my very self

And intimates — that's one thing; to imply

By 'knowledge' — loosing whatsoe'er I know

Among the vulgar who, by mere mistake, May brain themselves and me in consequence, —

That's quite another. 'O the daring flight!

30 This only bard maintains the exalted brow,
Nor grovels in the slime nor fears the gods!'

Did I fear — I play superstitious fool,
Who, with the due proviso, introduced,

Active and passive, their whole company As creatures too absurd for scorn itself?

Zeus? I have styled him — 'slave, mere thrashing-block!'

I'll tell you: in my very next of plays,
At Bacchos' feast, in Bacchos' honour, full

In front of Bacchos' representative,

40 I mean to make main-actor — Bacchos' self!

Forth shall he strut, apparent, first to last,
A blockhead, coward, braggart, liar, thief,

Demonstrated all these by his own mere Xanthias the man-slave: such man shows

such god
Shamed to brute-beastship by comparison!

And when ears have their fill of his abuse,
And eyes are sated with his pummelling, —

My Choros taking care, by, all the while,

Singing his glory, that men recognise
A god in the abused and pummelled 50
beast, —

Then, should one ear be stopped of auditor,

Should one spectator shut revolted eye, —
Why, the Priest's self will first raise out-

raged voice
'Back, thou barbarian, thou ineptitude!

Does not most licence hallow best our day,
And least decorum prove its strictest rite?

Since Bacchos bids his followers play the fool,

And there's no fooling like a majesty
Mocked at, — who mocks the god, obeys

the law —
Law which, impute but indiscretion to, 60

And . . . why, the spirit of Euripides
Is evidently active in the world!'

Do I stop here? No! feat of flightier force!
See Hermes! what commotion raged, —

reflect! —
When imaged god alone got injury

By drunkards' frolic! How Athenai stared

Aghast, then fell to frenzy, fit on fit, —
Ever the last the longest! At this hour,

The craze abates a little; so, my Play
Shall have up Hermes: and a Karion, 70

slave,
(Since there's no getting lower) calls our

friend
The profitable god, we honour so,

Whatever contumely fouls the mouth —
Bids him go earn more honest livelihood

By washing tripe in well-trough — wash he does,

Duly obedient! Have I dared my best?
Asklepios, answer! — deity in vogue,

Who visits Sophokles familiarly,
If you believe the old man, — at his age,

Living is dreaming, and strange guests 80
haunt door

Of house, belike, peep through and tap at times

When a friend yawns there waiting to be
fetched, —

At any rate, to memorise the fact,
He has spent money, set an altar up

In the god's temple, now in much repute.
That temple-service trust me to describe —

Cheaters and choused, the god, his brace of girls,

Their snake, and how they manage to snap gifts

'And consecrate the same into a bag,'
For whimsies done away with in the dark! 90

As if, a stone's throw from that theatre
Whereon I thus unmask their dupery,

The thing were not religious and august!

"Of Sophokles himself — nor word nor sign

Beyond a harmless parody or so!

He founds no anti-school, upsets no faith,
 But, living, lets live, the good easy soul
 Who, — if he saves his cash, unpoetlike,
 Loves wine and — never mind what other
 sport,
 Boasts for his father just a sword-blade-
 smith,
 Proves but queer captain when the people
 claim,
 For one who conquered with 'Antigone,'
 The right to undertake a squadron's
 charge, —
 And needs the son's help now to finish
 plays,
 10 Seeing his dotage calls for governance
 And Iophon to share his property, —
 Why, of all this, reported true, I breathe
 Not one word — true or false, I like the
 man.
 Sophokles lives and lets live: long live he!
 Otherwise, — sharp the scourge and hard
 the blow!
 "And what's my teaching but — accept the
 old,
 Contest the strange! acknowledge work
 that's done,
 Misdoubt men who have still their work
 to do!
 Religions, laws and customs, poetries,
 20 Are old? So much achieved victorious
 truth!
 Each work was product of a life-time,
 wrung
 From each man by an adverse world: for
 why?
 He worked, destroying other older work
 Which the world loved and so was loth
 to lose.
 Whom the world beat in battle — dust
 and ash!
 Who beat the world, left work in evidence,
 And wears its crown till new men live new
 lives,
 And fight new fights, and triumph in their
 turn.
 I mean to show you on the stage: you'll see
 30 My Just Judge only venture to decide
 Between two suitors, which is god, which
 man,
 By thrashing both of them as flesh can bear.
 You shall agree, — whichever bellows first,
 He's human; who holds longest out,
 divine:
 That is the only equitable test.
 Cruelty? Pray, who pricked them on to
 court
 My thong's award? Must they needs
 dominate?
 Then I — rebel. Their instinct grasps the
 new?
 Mine bids retain the old: a fight must be,
 40 And which is stronger the event will show.
 O but the pain! Your proved divinity

Still smarts all reddened? And the right-
 lier served!
 Was not some man's-flesh in him, after all?
 Do let us lack no frank acknowledgment
 There's nature common to both gods and
 men!
 All of them — spirit? What so winced was
 clay.
 Away pretence to some exclusive sphere
 Cloud-nourishing a sole selected few
 Fume-fed with self-superiority!
 I stand up for the common coarse-as-clay 50
 Existence, — stamp and ramp with heel and
 hoof
 On solid vulgar life, you fools disown.
 Make haste from your unreal eminence,
 And measure lengths with me upon that
 ground
 Whence this mud-pellet sings and sum-
 mons you!
 I know the soul, too, how the spark ascends
 And how it drops apace and dies away.
 I am your poet-peer, man thrice your
 match.
 I too can lead an airy life when dead,
 Fly like Kinesias when I'm cloudward 60
 bound;
 But here, no death shall mix with life it
 mars.
 "So, my old enemy who caused the fight,
 Own I have beaten you, Euripides!
 Or, — if your advocate would contra-
 vene, —
 Help him, Balaustion! Use the rosy
 strength!
 I have not done my utmost, — treated you
 As I might Aristullos, mint-perfumed, —
 Still, let the whole rage burst in brave at-
 tack!
 Don't pay the poor ambiguous compliment
 Of fearing any pearl-white knuckled fist 70
 Will damage this broad buttress of a brow!
 Fancy yourself my Aristonumos,
 Ameipsias or Sannurion: punch and pound!
 Three cuckoos who cry 'cuckoo'! much
 I care!
 They boil a stone! *Neblaretai! Rattei!"*
 —————
 Cannot your task have end here, Euthukles!
 Day by day glides our galley on its path:
 Still sunrise and still sunset, Rhodes half
 reached,
 And still, my patient scribe! no sunset's
 peace
 Descends more punctual than that brow's 80
 incline
 O'er tablets which your serviceable hand
 Prepares to trace. Why treasure up, for-
 sooth,
 These relics of a night that make me rich,
 But, half-remembered merely, leave so
 poor

Each stranger to Athenai and her past?
 For — how remembered! As some greedy
 hind
 Persuades a honeycomb, beyond the due,
 To yield its hoarding, — heedless what
 alloy
 Of the poor bee's own substance taints the
 gold
 Which, unforced, yields few drops, but
 purity, —
 So would you fain relieve of load this brain,
 Though the hived thoughts must bring
 away, with strength
 What words and weakness, strength's re-
 ceptacle —
 10 Wax from the store! Yet, — aching
 soothed away, —
 Accept the compound! No suspected
 scent
 But proves some rose was rifled, though its
 ghost
 Scarce lingers with what promised musk
 and myrrh.
 No need of farther squeezing. What
 remains
 Can only be Balaustion, just her speech.

Ah, but — because speech serves a pur-
 pose still! —

He ended with that flourish. I replied,

Fancy myself your Aristonumos?
 Advise me, rather, to remain myself,
 20 Balaustion, — mindful what mere mouse
 confronts
 The forest-monarch Aristophanes!
 I who, a woman, claim no quality
 Beside the love of all things loveable
 Created by a power pre-eminent
 In knowledge, as in love I stand perchance,
 — You, the consummately-creative! How
 Should I, then, dare deny submissive trust
 To any process aiming at result
 Such as you say your songs are pregnant
 with?
 30 Result, all judge: means, let none scrutinise
 Save those aware how glory best is gained
 By daring means to end, ashamed of
 shame,
 Constant in faith that only good works
 good,
 While evil yields no fruit but impotence!
 Graced with such plain good, I accept the
 means.
 Nay, if result itself in turn become
 Means, — who shall say? — to ends still
 loftier yet, —
 Though still the good prove hard to under-
 stand,
 The bad still seemingly predominate, —
 40 Never may I forget which order bears
 The burden, toils to win the great reward,

And finds, in failure, the grave punish-
 ment,
 So, meantime, claims of me a faith I yield!
 Moreover, a mere woman, I recoil
 From what may prove man's-work per-
 missible,
 Imperative. Rough strokes surprise:
 what then?
 Some lusty armsweep needs must cause the
 crash
 Of thorn and bramble, ere those shrubs,
 those flowers,
 We fain would have earth yield exclusively,
 Are sown, matured and garlanded for boys 50
 And girls, who know not how the growth
 was gained,
 Finally, am I not a foreigner?
 No born and bred Athenian, — isled about,
 I scarce can drink, like you, at every
 breath,
 Just some particular doctrine which may
 best
 Explain the strange thing I revolt against —
 How — by involvement, who may extri-
 cate? —
 Religion perks up through impiety,
 Law leers with licence, folly wise-like
 frowns,
 The seemly lurks inside the abominable. 60
 But opposites, — each neutralises each
 Haply by mixture: what should promise
 death,
 May haply give the good ingredient force,
 Disperse in fume the antagonistic ill.
 This institution, therefore, — Comedy, —
 By origin, a rite, — by exercise,
 Proved an achievement tasking poet's
 power
 To utmost, eking legislation out
 Beyond the legislator's faculty, 70
 Playing the censor where the moralist
 Declines his function, far too dignified
 For dealing with minute absurdities:
 By efficacy, — virtue's guard, the scourge
 Of vice, each folly's fly-flap, arm in aid
 Of all that's righteous, customary, sound
 And*wholesome; sanctioned therefore, —
 better say,
 Prescribed for fit acceptance of this age
 By, not alone the long recorded roll
 Of earlier triumphs but, success to-day —
 (The multitude as prompt recipient still 80
 Of good gay teaching from that monitor
 They crowned this morning — Aristoph-
 anes —
 As when Sousarion's car first traversed
 street) —
 This product of Athenai — I dispute,
 Impugn? There's just one only circum-
 stance
 Explains that! I, poor critic, see, hear,
 feel;
 But eyes, ears, senses prove me — for-
 eigner!

Who shall gainsay that the raw new-come guest
 Blames oft, too sensitive? On every side
 Of — larger than your stage — life's spectacle,
 Convention here permits and there forbids
 Impulse and action, nor alleges more
 Than some mysterious "So do all, and so
 Does no one," which the hasty stranger
 blames
 Because, who bends the head unquestioning,
 Transgresses, turns to wrong what else
 were right,
 By failure of a reference to law
 Beyond convention; blames unjustly,
 too —
 As if, through that defect, all gained were
 lost
 And slave-brand set on brow indelibly; —
 Blames unobservant or experienceless
 That men, like trees, if stout and sound and
 sane,
 Show stem no more affected at the root
 By bough's exceptional submissive dip
 Of leaf, and bell, light danced at end of
 spray
 To windy fitfulness in wayward sport —
 No more lie prostrate — than low files of
 flower
 Which, when the blast goes by, unruffled
 raise
 Each head again o'er ruder meadow-wreck
 Of thorn and thistle that refractory
 Demurred to cower at passing wind's
 caprice.
 Why shall not guest extend like charity,
 Conceive how, — even when astounded
 most
 That natives seem to acquiesce in much
 Changed by prescription, they affirm, to
 gold, —
 Such may still bring to test, still bear away
 Safely and surely much of good and true
 Though latent ore, themselves unspecked,
 unspoiled?
 Fresh bathed i' the icebrook, any hand may
 pass
 A placid moment through the lamp's
 fierce flame:
 And who has read your Lemnians, seen
 The Hours,
 Heard Female-Playhouse-seat-Preoccupants,
 May feel no worse effect than, once a year,
 Those who leave decent vesture, dress in
 rags
 And play the mendicant, conform thereby
 To country's rite, and then, no beggartaint
 Retained, don vesture due next morrow-
 day.
 What if I share the stranger's weakness
 then?

Well, could I also show his strength, his
 sense
 Untutored, ay! — but then untampered
 with!

I fancy, though the world seems old
 enough,
 Though Hellas be the sole unbarbarous
 land,
 Years may conduct to such extreme of age,
 And outside Hellas so isles new may lurk,
 That haply, — when and where remain
 a dream! —
 In fresh days when no Hellas fills the world,
 In novel lands as strange where, ail the 50
 same,
 Their men and women yet behold, as we,
 Blue heaven, black earth, and love, hate,
 hope and fear,
 Over again, unhelped by Attiké —
 Haply some philanthropic god steers bark,
 Gift-laden, to the lonely ignorance
 Islanded, say, where mist and snow mass
 hard
 To metal — ay, those Kassiterides!
 Then asks: "Ye apprehend the human
 form.
 What of this statue, made to Pheidias'
 mind,
 This picture, as it pleased our Zeuxis paint? 60
 Ye too feel truth, love beauty: judge of
 these!"
 Such strangers may judge feebly, stranger-
 like:
 "Each hair too indistinct — for, see our
 own!
 Hands, not skin-coloured as these hands
 we have,
 And lo, the want of due decorum here!
 A citizen, arrayed in civic garb,
 Just as he walked your streets apparently,
 Yet wears no sword by side, adventures
 thus,
 In thronged Athenai! foolish painter's-
 freak!
 While here's his brother-sculptor found at 70
 fault
 Still more egregiously, who shames the
 world,
 Shows wrestler, wrestling at the public
 games,
 Atrociously exposed from head to foot!"
 Sure, the Immortal would impart at once
 Our slow-stored knowledge, how small
 truths suppressed
 Conduce to the far greater truth's dis-
 play, —
 Would replace simple by instructed sense,
 And teach them how Athenai first so tamed
 The natural fierceness that her progeny
 Discarded arms nor feared the beast in 80
 man:
 Wherefore at games, where earth's wise
 gratitude,

- Proved by responsive culture, claimed the prize
 For man's mind, body, each in excellence, —
 When mind had bared itself, came body's turn,
 And only irreligion grudged the gods
 One naked glory of their master-work
 Where all is glorious rightly understood, —
 The human frame; enough that man mistakes:
 Let him not think the gods mistaken too!
- But, peradventure, if the stranger's eye
 10 Detected . . . Ah, too high my fancy-flight!
 Pheidias, forgive, and Zeuxis bear with me —
 How, on your faultless should I fasten fault
 Of my own framing, even? Only say, —
 Suppose the impossible were realised,
 And some as patent incongruity,
 Unseemliness, — of no more warrant, there
 And then, than now and here, whate'er the time
 And place, — I say, the Immortal — who
 can doubt? —
 Would never shrink, but own "The blot escaped
 20 Our artist: thus he shows humanity."
 May stranger tax one peccant part in thee,
 Poet, three-parts divine? May I proceed?
- "Comedy is prescription and a rite."
 Since when? No growth of the blind antique time,
 "It rose in Attiké with liberty;
 When freedom falls, it too will fall."
 Scarce so!
 Your games, — the Olympian, Zeus gave birth to these;
 Your Pythian, — these were Phoibos' institute.
 Isthmian, Nemeian, — Theseus, Herakles
 30 Appointed each, the boys and barbers say!
 Earth's day is growing late: where's Comedy?
 "Oh, that commenced an age since, — two, belike, —
 In Megara, whence here they brought the thing!"
 Or I misunderstand, or here's the fact —
 Your grandsire could recall that rustic song,
 How suchanone was thief, and miser such
 And how, — immunity from chastisement
 Once promised to bold singers of the same
 By daylight on the drunkard's holiday, —
 40 The clever fellow of the joyous troop
 Tried acting what before he sang about,
 Acted and stole, or hoarded, acting too:
 While his companions ranged a-row, closed up
 For Choros, — bade the general rabblement
- Sit, see, hear, laugh, — not join the dance themselves.
 Soon, the same clever fellow found a mate,
 And these two did the whole stage-mimicking,
 Still closer in approach to Tragedy, —
 So led the way to Aristophanes,
 Whose grandsire saw Sousarion, and whose sire —
 Chionides; yourself wrote "Banqueters"
 When Aischulos had made "Prometheus,"
 nay,
 All of the marvels; Sophokles, — I'll cite,
 "Oidipous" — and Euripides — I bend
 The head — "Medeia" henceforth awed
 the world!
 "Banqueters," "Babylonians" — next come you!
 Surely the great days that left Hellas free
 Happened before such advent of huge help,
 Eighty-years-late assistance? Marathon, 60
 Plataia, Salamis were fought, I think,
 Before new educators stood reproved,
 Or foreign legates blushed, excepted to!
 Where did the helpful rite pretend its rise?
 Did it break forth, as gifts divine are wont,
 Plainly authentic, incontestably
 Adequate to the helpful ordinance?
 Founts, dowered with virtue, pulse out pure
 from source;
 'Tis there we taste the god's benign intent:
 Not when, — fatigued away by journey, foul
 With brutish trampling, — crystal sinks to 70
 slime,
 And lymph forgets the first salubriousness.
 Sprang Comedy to light thus crystal-pure?
 "Nowise!" yourself protest with vehemence;
 "Gross, bestial, did the clowns' diversion break;
 Every successor paddled in the slush;
 Nay, my contemporaries one and all
 Gay played the mudlark till I joined their
 game;
 Then was I first to change buffoonery
 For wit, and stupid filth for cleanly sense,
 Transforming pointless joke to purpose 80
 fine,
 Transfusing rude enforcement of home-law —
 'Drop knave's-tricks, deal more neighbour-like, ye boors!' —
 With such new glory of poetic breath
 As, lifting application far past use
 O' the present, launched it o'er men's lowly
 heads
 To future time, when high and low alike
 Are dead and done with, while my airy
 power
 Flies disengaged, as vapour from what
 stuff
 It — say not, dwelt in — fittier, dallied
 with

- To forward work, which done, — deliverance brave, —
It soars away, and mud subsides to dust.
Say then, myself invented Comedy!"
- So mouths full many a famed Parabasis!
Agreed! No more, then, of prescriptive use,
Authorisation by antiquity,
For what offends our judgment! 'Tis your work,
Performed your way: not work delivered you
Intact, intact producible in turn.
10 Everywhere have you altered old to new —
Your will, your warrant: therefore, work must stand
Or stumble by intrinsic worth. What worth?
- Its aim and object! Peace you advocate,
And war would fain abolish from the land:
Support religion, lash irreverence,
Yet laughingly administer rebuke
To superstitious folly, — equal fault!
While innovating rashness, lust of change,
New laws, new habits, manners, men and things,
20 Make your main quarry, — "oldest" meaning "best."
You check the fretful litigation-itch,
Withstand mob-rule, expose mob-flattery,
Punish mob-favourites; most of all press hard
On sophists who assist the demagogue,
And poets their accomplices in crime.
Such your main quarry: by the way, you strike
Ignobler game, mere miscreants, snob or scamp,
Cowardly, gluttonous, effeminate:
Still with a bolt to spare when dramatist
30 Proves haply unproficient in his art.
Such aims — alone, no matter for the means —
Declare the unexampled excellence
Of their first author — Aristophanes!
- Whereat — Euripides, oh, not thyself —
Augustlier than the need! — thy century
Of subjects dreamed and dared and done,
before
"Banqueters" gave dark earth enlightenment,
Or "Babylonians" played Prometheus here, —
These let me summon to defend thy cause!
40 Lo, as indignantly took life and shape
Labour by labour, all of Herakles, —
Palpably fronting some o'erbold pretence
"Eurustheus slew the monsters, purged the world!"
So shall each poem pass you and imprint
Shame on the strange assurance. You praised Peace?
- Sing him full-face, Kresphontes! "Peace" the theme?
"Peace, in whom depths of wealth lie, — of the blest
Immortals beauteousest, —
Come! for the heart within me dies away,
So long dost thou delay!
50 O I have feared lest old age, much annoy,
Conquer me, quite outstrip the tardy joy,
Thy gracious triumph-season I would see,
The song, the dance, the sport, profuse of crowns to be
But come! for my sake, goddess great and dear,
Come to the city here!
Hateful Sedition drive thou from our homes,
With Her who madly roams
Rejoicing in the steel against the life
That's whetted — banish Strife!" 60
- Shall I proceed? No need of next and next!
That were too easy, play so presses play,
Trooping tumultuous, each with instance apt,
Each eager to confute the idle boast.
What virtue but stands forth panegyrised,
What vice, unburned by stigma, in the books
Which bettered Hellas, — beyond graven gold
Or gem-indenture, sung by Phoibos' self
And saved in Kunthia's mountain treasure-house —
Ere you, man, moralist, were youth or boy? 70
— Not praise which, in the proffer, mocks the praised
By sly admixture of the blameworthy
And enforced coupling of base fellowship, —
Not blame which gloats the while it frowning laughs,
"Allow one glance on horrors — laughable!" —
This man's entire of heart and soul, discharged
Its love or hate, each unalloyed by each,
On objects worthy either; earnestness,
Attribute him, and power! but novelty?
Nor his nor yours a doctrine — all the 80 world's!
What man of full-grown sense and sanity
Holds other than the truth, — wide Hellas through, —
Though truth, he acts, discredit truth he holds?
What imbecile has dared to formulate
"Love war, hate peace, become a litigant!" —
And so preach on, reverse each rule of right
Because he quarrels, combats, goes to law?
No, for his comment runs, with smile or sigh

According to heart's temper, "Peace were best,

Except occasions when we put aside
Peace, and bid all the blessings in her gift
Quick join the crows, for sake of Marathon!"

"Nay," you reply; for one, whose mind
withstands

His heart, and, loving peace, for conscience' sake

Wants war, — you find a crowd of hypocrites

Whose conscience means ambition, grudge
and greed.

On such, reproof, sonorous doctrine, melts
20 Distilled like universal but thin dew

Which all too sparsely covers country:
dear,

No doubt, to universal crop and clown,
Still, each bedewed keeps his own head-
gear dry

With upthrust *skiadeion*, shakes adroit
The droppings to his neighbour. No!
collect

All of the moisture, leave unhurt the heads
Which nowise need a washing, save and
store

And dash the whole condensed to one fierce
spout

On some one evildoer, sheltered close, —
o The fool supposed, — till you beat guard
away,

And showed your audience, not that war
was wrong,

But Lamachos absurd, — case, crests and
all, —

Not that democracy was blind of choice,
But Kleon and Huperbolos were shams:
Not superstition vile, but Nikias crazed, —
The concrete for the abstract: that's the
way!

What matters Choros crying "Hence, im-
pure!"

You cried, "Ariphrades does thus and
thus!"

Now, earnestness seems never earnest
more

30 Than when it dons for garb — indiffer-
ence;

So there's much laughing: but, compensa-
tive,

When frowning follows laughter, then
indeed

Scout innuendo, sarcasm, irony! —
Wit's polished warfare glancing at first
graze

From off hard headpiece, coarsely-coated
brain

O' the commonalty — whom, unless you
prick

To purpose, what avails that finer pates
Succumb to simple scratching? Those —
not these —

'Tis Multitude, which, moved, fines
Lamachos,

Banishes Kleon and burns Sokrates, 4

House over head, or, better, poisons him.
Therefore in dealing with King Multitude,
Club-drub the callous numskulls! In
and in

Beat this essential consequential fact
That here they have a hater of the three,
Who hates in word, phrase, nickname,
epithet

And illustration, beyond doubt at all!
And similarly, would you win assent

To — Peace, suppose? You tickle the
tough hide

With good plain pleasure her concomi- 5
tant —

And, past mistake again, exhibit Peace —
Peace, vintager and festive, cheesecake-
time,

Hare-slice-and-pea-soup-season, household
joy:

Theoria's¹ beautiful belongings match
Opора's¹ lavish condescendings: brief,
Since here the people are to judge, you press
Such argument as people understand:
If with exaggeration — what care you?

Have I misunderstood you in the main?
No! then must answer be, such argument, 6

Such policy, no matter what good love
Or hate it help, in practice proves absurd,
Useless and null: henceforward intercepts
Sober effective blow at what you blame,
And renders nugatory rightful praise

Of thing or person. The coarse brush has
daubed —

What room for the fine limner's pencil-
mark?

Blame? You curse, rather, till who
blames must blush —

Lean to apology or praise, more like!
Does garment, simpered o'er as white, 7

prove grey?

"Black, blacker than Acharnian charcoal,
black

Beyond Kimmerian, Stugian blackness
black,"

You bawl, till men sigh "nearer snowi-
ness!"

What follows? What one faint-rewarding
fall

Of foe belaboured ne'er so lustily?
Laugh Lamachos from out the people's
heart?

He died, commanding, "hero," say your-
self!

Gibe Nikias into privacy? — nay, shake
Kleon a little from his arrogance

By cutting him to shoe-sole-shreds? I 8
think,

He ruled his life long and, when time was
ripe,

¹ Characters in the "Lysistrata."

- Died fighting for amusement, — good tough hide!
- Sokrates still goes up and down the streets, And Aristullos puts his speech in book, When both should be abolished long ago. Nay, wretchedest of rags, Aripkrades — You have been fouling that redoubtable Harp-player, twenty years, with what effect?
- Still he strums on, strums ever cheerily, And earns his wage, — "Who minds a joke?" men say.
- 10 No, friend! The statues stand — mud-stained at most —
- Titan or pygmy: what achieves their fall Will be, long after mud is flung and spent, Some clear thin spirit-thrust of lightning — truth
- Your praise, then — honey-smearing helps your friend, More than blame's ordure-smirch hurts foe, perhaps?
- Peace, now, misunderstood, ne'er prized enough, You have interpreted to ignorance Till ignorance opes eye, bat-blind before, And for the first time knows Peace means the power
- 20 On maw of pan-cake, cheese-cake, barley-cake, No stop nor stint to stuffing. While, in camp, Who fights chews rancid tunny, onions raw, Peace sits at cosy feast with lamp and fire, Complaisant smooth-sleeked flute-girls giggling gay.
- How thick and fast the snow falls, freezing War
- Who shrugs, campaigns it, and may break a shin
- Or twist an ankle! come, who hesitates To give Peace, over War, the preference?
- 30 Ah, friend — had this indubitable fact Happly occurred to poor Leonidas, How had he turned tail on Thermopulai! It cannot be that even his few wits Were addled to the point that, so advised, Preposterous he had answered — "Cakes are prime, Hearth-sides are snug, sleek dancing-girls have worth, And yet — for country's sake, to save our gods Their temples, save our ancestors their tombs, Save wife and child and home and liberty, I would chew sliced-salt-fish, bear snow — nay, starve,
- 40 If need were, — and by much prefer the choice!"
- Why, friend, your genuine hero, all the while,
- Has been — who served precisely for your butt —
- Kleonumos that, wise, cast shield away On battle-ground; cried "Take my buckler be, Embossed with cream-clot! peace, not war, I choose, Holding with Dikaiopolis!" Comedy Shall triumph, Dikaiopolis win assent, When Miltiades shall next shirk Marathon, Themistokles swap Salamis for — cake, And Kimon grunt "Peace, grant me 50 dancing-girls!"
- But sooner, hardly! twenty-five years since,
- The war began, — such pleas for Peace have reached
- A reasonable age. The end shows all. And so with all the rest you advocate! "Wise folk leave litigation! 'ware the wasps!
- Whoso loves law and lawyers, heliast-like, Wants hemlock!" None shows that so funnily.
- But, once cure madness, how comports himself Your same exemplar, what's our gain thereby?
- Philokleon turns Bdelukleon! just this 60 change, —
- New sanity gets straightway drunk as sow,
- Cheats baker-wives, brawls, kicks, cuffs, curses folk,
- Parades a shameless flute-girl, bandies filth
- With his own son who cured his father's cold
- By making him catch fever — funnily!
- But as for curing love of lawsuits — faugh!
- And how does new improve upon the old — Your boast — in even abusing? Rough, may be —
- Still, honest was the old mode. "Call thief — thief!"
- But never call thief even — murderer! 70
- Much less call fop and fribble, worse one whit
- Than fribble and fop! Spare neither! beat your brains
- For adequate invective, — cut the life Clean out each quality, — but load your lash
- With no least lie, or we pluck scourge from hand!
- Does poet want a whipping, write bad verse,
- Inculcate foul deeds? There's the fault to flog!
- You vow "The rascal cannot read nor write,
- Spends more in buying fish than Morsimos,

- Somebody helps his Muse and courts his wife,
His uncle deals in crockery, and last, —
Himself's a stranger!" That's the cap and crown
Of stinging-nettle, that's the master-stroke!
What poet-rival, — after "housebreaker,"
"Fish-gorging," "midnight footpad" and so forth, —
Proves not, beside, "a stranger"? Chased from charge
To charge, and, lie by lie, laughed out of court, —
Lo, wit's sure refuge, satire's grand resource —
10 All, from Kratinos downward — "strangers" they!
Pity the trick's too facile! None so raw
Among your playmates but have caught the ball
And sent it back as briskly to — yourself!
You too, my Attic, are styled "stranger" — Rhodes,
Aigina, Lindos or Kameiros, — nay,
'Twas Egypt reared, if Eupolis be right,
Who wrote the comedy (Kratinos vows)
Kratinos helped a little! Kleon's self
Was nigh promoted Comic, when he haled
20 My poet into court, and o'er the coals
Hauled and re-hauled "the stranger, — insolent,
Who brought out plays, usurped our privilege!"
Why must you Comics one and all take stand
On lower ground than truth from first to last?
Why all agree to let folk disbelieve,
So laughter but reward a funny lie?
Repel such onslaughts — answer, sad and grave,
Your fancy-fleerings — who would stoop so low?
Your own adherents whisper, — when disgust
30 Too magnificently thrills Logeion through
At — Perikles invents this present war
Because men robbed his mistress of three maids —
Or — Sokrates wants burning, house o'er head, —
"What, so obtuse, not read between the lines?
Our poet means no mischief! All should know —
Ribaldry here implies a compliment!
He deals with things, not men, — his men are things —
Each represents a class, plays figure-head
And names the ship: no meaner than the first
40 Would serve; he styles a trireme 'Sokrates'
Fears 'Sokrates' may prove unseaworthy
(That's merely — 'Sophists are the bane of boys')
Rat-riddled ('they are capable of theft'),
Rotten or whatso'er shows ship-disease,
('They war with gods and worship whirligig').
You never took the joke for earnest?
Scarce
Supposed mere figure-head meant entire ship,
And Sokrates — the whole fraternity?"
- This then is Comedy, our sacred song,
Censor of vice, and virtue's guard as sure: 50
Manners-instructing, morals' stop-estrays,
Which, born a twin with public liberty,
Thrives with its welfare, dwindles with its wane!
Liberty? what so exquisitely framed
And fitted to suck dry its life of life
To last faint fibre? — since that life is truth.
You who profess your indignation swells
At sophistry, when specious words confuse
Deeds right and wrong, distinct before,
you say —
(Though all that's done is — dare veracity, 60
Show that the true conception of each deed
Affirmed, in vulgar parlance, "wrong" or "right,"
Proves to be neither, as the hasty hold,
But, change your side, shoots light, where dark alone
Was apprehended by the vulgar sense)
You who put sophistry to shame, and shout
'There's but a single side to man and thing;
A side so much more big than thing or man
Possibly can be, that — believe 'tis true?
Such were too marvellous simplicity!" — 70
Confess, those sophists whom yourself depict,
(— Abide by your own painting!) what they teach,
They wish at least their pupil to believe,
And, what believe, to practise! Did you wish
Hellas should haste, as taught, with torch in hand,
And fire the horrid Speculation-shop?
Straight the shop's master rose and showed the mob
What man was your so monstrous Sokrates;
Himself received amusement, why not they?
Just as did Kleon first play magistrate 80
And bid you put your birth in evidence —
Since no unbadged buffoon is licensed here
To shame us all when foreign guests may mock —
Then, — birth established, fooling licensed you, —
He, duty done, resumed mere auditor,

Laughed with the loudest at his Lamia-
shape,
Kukloboros-roaring, and the camel-rest.
Nay, Aristullos, — once your volley spent
On the male-Kirké and her swinish crew, —
PLATON, — so others call the youth we
love, —

Sends your performance to the curious
king —

"Do you desire to know Athenai's knack
At turning seriousness to pleasantry?

Read this! One Aristullos means myself.

The author is indeed a merry grig!"

Nay, it would seem as if yourself were bent
On laying down the law "Tell lies I
must —

Aforethought and of purpose, no mistake!"
When forth yourself step, tell us from the
stage

"Here you behold the King of Comedy —
Me, who, the first, have purged my every
piece

From each and all my predecessors' filth,
Abjured those satyr-adjuncts sown to bid
The boys laugh, satyr-jokes whereof not
one

Least sample but would make my hair turn
grey

Beyond a twelvemonth's ravage! I re-
nounce

Mountebank-claptrap, such as firework-
fizz

And torchflare, or else nuts and barley-
corns

Scattered among the crowd, to scramble
for

And stop their mouths with; no such stuff
shames me!

Who, — what's more serious, — know
both when to strike

And when to stay my hand: once dead, my
foe,

Why, done, my fighting! I attack a
corpse?

I spare the corpse-like even! punish age?

I pity from my soul that sad effete

Toothless old mumbler called Kratinos!
once

My rival, — now, alack, the dotard slinks
Ragged and hungry to what hole's his
home;

Ay, slinks thro' byways where no passenger
Flings him a bone to pick. You formerly
Adored the Muses' darling: dotard now,
Why, he may starve! O mob most mu-
table!"

So you harangued in person; while, —
to point

Precisely out, these were but lies you
launched, —

Prompt, a play followed primed with
satyr-frisks,

No spice spared of the stomach-turning
stew,

Full-fraught with torch-display, and barley-
throw,

And Kleon, dead enough, bedaubed
afresh;

While daft Kratinos — home to hole
trudged he,

Wrung dry his wit to the last vinous dregs,
Decanted them to "Bottle," — beat, next

year, —

"Bottle" and dregs — your best of
"Clouds" and dew!

Where, Comic King, may keenest eye
detect

Improvement on your predecessors' work
Except in lying more audaciously?

Why — genius! That's the grandeur,
that's the gold

That's *you* — superlatively true to touch —
Gold, leaf or lump — gold, anyhow the
mass

Takes manufacture and proves Pallas'
casque

Or, at your choice, simply a cask to keep
Corruption from decay. Your rivals'
hoard

May ooze forth, lacking such preservative:
Yours cannot — gold plays guardian far

too well!

Genius, I call *you*: dross, your rivals
share;

Ay, share and share alike, too! says the
world,

However you pretend supremacy
In aught beside that gold, your very own.

Satire? "Kratinos for our satirist!"
The world cries. Elegance? "Who elegant

As Eupolis?" resounds as noisily.
Artistic fancy? Choros-creatures quaint?

Magnes invented "Birds" and "Frogs"
enough,

Archippos punned, Hegemon parodied,
To heart's content, before you stepped on
stage.

Moral invective? Eupolis exposed

"That prating beggar, he who stole the
cup,"

Before your "Clouds" rained grime on
Sokrates;

Nay, what beat "Clouds" but "Konnos,"
muck for mud?

Courage? How long before, well-masked,
you poured

Abuse on Eukrates and Lusikles,
Did Telekleides and Hermippos pelt

Their Perikles and Kumon? standing
forth,

Bareheaded, not safe crouched behind a
name, —

Philonides or else Kallistratos,
Put forth, when danger threatened, —

mask for face,
To bear the brunt, — if blame fell, take the
blame, —

- If praise . . . why, frank laughed Aristophanes
 "They write such rare stuff? No, I promise you!"
 Rather, I see all true improvements, made
 Or making, go against you — tooth and nail
 Contended with; 'tis still Moruchides,
 'Tis Euthumenes, Surakosios, nay,
 Argurrios and Kinesias, — common sense
 And public shame, these only cleanse your style!
 Coerced, prohibited, — you grin and bear,
 And, soon as may be, hug to heart again
 The banished nastiness too dear to drop!
 Krates could teach and practise festive song
 Yet scorn scurrility; as gay and good,
 Pherekrates could follow. *Who* loosed hold,
 Must let fall rose-wreath, stoop to muck once more?
 Did your particular self advance in aught,
 Task the sad genius — steady slave the while
 To further — say, the patriotic aim?
 No, there's deterioration manifest
 Year by year, play by play! survey them all,
 From that boy's-triumph when "Acharnes" dawned,
 To "Thesmophoriazousai," — this man's-shame!
 There, truly, patriot zeal so prominent
 Allowed friends' plea perhaps: the baser stuff
 Was but the nobler spirit's vehicle.
 Who would imprison, unvolatilise
 A violet's perfume, blends with fatty oils
 Essence too fugitive in flower alone;
 So, calling unguent — violet, call the play —
 Obscenity impregnated with "Peace"!
 But here's the boy grown bald, and here's the play
 With twenty years' experience: where's one spice
 Of odour in the hog's-lard? what pretends
 To aught except a grease-pot's quality?
 Friend, sophist-hating! know, — worst sophistry
 Is when man's own soul plays its own self false,
 Reasons a vice into a virtue, pleads
 "I detail sin to shame its author" — not
 "I shame Aripkrades for sin's display"! —
 "I show Opéra to commend Sweet Home" —
 Not "I show Bacchis for the striplings' sake!"
 Yet all the same — O genius and O gold —
 Had genius ne'er diverted gold from use
 Worthy the temple, to do copper's work
- And coat a swine's trough — which abundantly
 Might furnish Phoibos' tripod, Pallas' throne!
 Had you, I dream, discarding all the base,
 The brutish, spurned alone convention's watch
 And ward against invading decency
 Disguised as licence, law in lawlessness,
 And so, re-ordinating outworn rule,
 Made Comedy and Tragedy combine,
 Prove some new Both-yet-neither, all one bard,
 Euripides with Aristophanes
 Co-operant! this, reproducing Now
 As that gave Then existence: Life to-day,
 This, as that other — Life dead long ago!
 The mob decrees such feat no crown, perchance,
 But — why call crowning the reward of quest?
 Tell him, my other poet, — where thou walk'st
 Some rarer world than e'er Ilissos washed!
 But dream goes idly in the air. To earth!
 Earth's question just amounts to — which succeeds,
 Which fails of two life-long antagonists?
 Suppose my charges all mistake! assume
 Your end, despite ambiguous means, the best —
 The only! you and he, a patriot-pair,
 Have striven alike for one result — say, Peace!
 You spoke your best straight to the arbiters —
 Our people: have you made them end this war
 By dint of laughter and abuse and lies
 And postures of Opéra? Sadly — No!
 This war, despite your twenty-five years' work,
 May yet endure until Athenai falls,
 And freedom falls with her. So much for you!
 Now, the antagonist Euripides —
 Has he succeeded better? Who shall say?
 He spoke quite o'er the heads of Kleon's crowd
 To a dim future, and if there he fail,
 Why, you are fellows in adversity.
 But that's unlike the fate of wise words launched
 By music on their voyage. Hail, Depart,
 Arrive, Glad Welcome! Not my single wish —
 Yours also wafts the white sail on its way,
 Your nature too is kingly. All beside
 I call pretension — no true porentate,
 Whatever intermediary be crowned,
 Zeus or Poseidon, where the vulgar sky

Lacks not Triballo¹ to complete the group
I recognise, — behind such phantom-
crew, —

Necessity, Creation, Poet's Power,
Else never had I dared approach, appeal
To poetry, power, Aristophanes!
But I trust truth's inherent kingliness,
Trust who, by reason of much truth, shall
reign

More or less royally — may prayer but
push

His sway past limit, purge the false from
true!

Nor, even so, had boldness nerved my
tongue

10 But that the other king stands suddenly,
In all the grand investiture of death,
Bowing your knee beside my lowly head —
Equals one moment!

Now, arise and go!

Both have done homage to Euripides!

Silence pursued the words: till he broke
out —

"Scarce so! This constitutes, I may be-
lieve,

Sufficient homage done by who defames
Your poet's foe since you account me
such;

But homage-proper, — pay it by defence
10 Of him, direct defence and not oblique,
Not by mere mild admonishment of me!"

Defence? The best, the only! I replied.
A story goes — When Sophokles, last year,
Cited before tribunal by his son
(A poet — to complete the parallel)
Was certified unsound of intellect,
And claimed as only fit for tutelage,
Since old and doating and incompetent
To carry on this world's work, — the
defence

30 Consisted just in his reciting (calm
As the verse bore, which sets our heart
a-swell

And voice a-heaving too tempestuously)
That choros-chant "The station of the
steed,

Stranger! thou comest to, — Kolonos
white!"

Then he looked round and all revolt was
dead.

You know the one adventure of my life —
What made Euripides Balaustion's friend.
When I last saw him, as he bade farewell,
"I sang another 'Herakles,'" smiled he;

40 "It gained no prize: your love be prize I
gain!

Take it — the tablets also where I traced
The story first with stulos pendent still —
Nay, the psalterion may complete the gift,

: A clownish god.

So, should you croon the ode bewailing
Age,

Yourselves shall modulate — same notes,
same strings —

With the old friend who loved Balaustion
once."

There they lie! When you broke our
solitude,

We were about to honour him once more
By reading the consummate Tragedy.

Night is advanced; I have small mind to 50
sleep;

May I go on, and read, — so make defence,
So test true godship? You affirm, not I,

Beating the god, affords such test: I
hold

That when rash hands but touch divinity,
The chains drop off, the prison-walls
dispart,

And — fire — he fronts mad Pentheus!
Dare we try?

Accordingly I read the perfect piece.

HERAKLES.

AMPHITRUON.

Zeus' Couchmate, — who of mortals knows
not me,

Argive Amphitruon whom Alkaios sired
Of old, as Perseus him, I — Herakles? 60
My home, this Thebai where the earth-
born spike

Of Sown-ones burgeoned: Ares saved
from these

A handful of their seed that stocks to-day
With children's children Thebai, Kadmos
built.

Of these had Kreon birth, Menoikeus'
child,

King of the country, — Kreon that became
The father of this woman, Megara,
Whom, when time was, Kadmeians one
and all

Pealed praise to, marriage-songs with
fluted help,

While to my dwelling that grand Herakles 70
Bore her, his bride. But, leaving Thebes
— where I

Abode perforce — this Megara and those
Her kinsmen, the desire possessed my son
Rather to dwell in Argos, that walled work,
Kuklopiian city, which I fly, myself,

Because I slew Elektruon. Seeking so
To ease away my hardships and once more
Inhabit his own land, for my return

Heav'n the price he pays Eurustheus
there —

The letting in of light on this choked 80
world!

Either he promised, vanquished by the
goad

Of Heré, or because fate willed it thus.
The other labours — why, he toiled them through;

But for this last one — down by Tainaros,
Its mouth, to Haides' realm descended he
To drag into the light the three-shaped hound

Of Hell: whence Herakles returns no more.
Now, there's an old-world tale, Kadmeians have,

How Dirké's husband was a Lukos once,
Holding the seven-towered city here in sway
30 Before they ruled the land, white-steeded pair,

The children Amphion, Zethos, born to Zeus.
This Lukos' son, — named like his father too,

No born Kadmeian but Euboiá's gift, —
Comes and kills Kreon, lords it o'er the land,

Falling upon our town sedition-sick.
To us, akin to Kreon, just that bond
Becomes the worst of evils, seemingly;

For, since my son is in the earth's abyssms,
This man of valour, Lukos, lord and king,
20 Seeks now to slay these sons of Herakles,
And slay his wife as well, — by murder thus

Thinking to stamp out murder, — slay too me,

(If me 'tis fit you count among men still, —
Useless old age) and all for fear lest these,
Grown men one day, exact due punishment
Of bloodshed and their mother's father's fate.

I therefore, since he leaves me in these domes,

The children's household guardian, — left, when earth's

Dark dread he underwent, that son of mine, —

30 I, with their mother, lest his boys should die,

Sit at this altar of the saviour Zeus
Which, glory of triumphant spear, he raised

Conquering — my nobly-born! — the Minuai.

Here do we guard our station, destitute
Of all things, drink, food, raiment, on bare ground

Couched side by side: sealed out of house and home

Sit we in a resourcelessness of help.

Our friends — why, some are no true friends, I see!

The rest, that are true, want the means to aid.

40 So operates in man adversity:
Whereof may never anybody — no,
Though half of him should really wish me well, —

Happen to taste! a friend-test faultless; that!

MEGARA.

Old man, who erst didst raze the Taphian town,

Illustriously, the army-leader, thou,
Of speared Kadmeians — how gods play men false!

I, now, missed nowise fortune in my sire,
Who, for his wealth, was boasted mighty once,

Having supreme rule, — for the love of which

Leap the long lances forth at favoured 50 breasts, —

And having children too: and me he gave
Thy son, his house with that of Herakles
Uniting by the far-famed marriage-bed.

And now these things are dead and flown away,

While thou and I await our death, old man,
These Herakleian boys too, whom — my chicks —

I save beneath my wings like brooding bird.

But one or other falls to questioning.
"O mother," cries he, "where in all the world

Is father gone to? What's he doing? 60 when

Will he come back?" At fault through tender years,

They seek their sire. For me, I put them off,

Telling them stories; at each creak of doors,

All wonder "Does he come?" — and all a-foot

Make for the fall before the parent knee.
Now then, what hope, what method of escape

Facilitatest thou? — for, thee, old man,
I look to, — since we may not leave by stealth

The limits of the land, and guards, more strong

Than we, are at the outlets: nor in friends 70

Remain to us the hopes of safety more.

Therefore, whatever thy decision be,
Impart it for the common good of all!

Lest now should prove the proper time to die,

Though, being weak, we spin it out and live.

AMPHITRUON.

Daughter, it scarce is easy, do one's best,
To blurt out counsel, things at such a pass.

MEGARA.

You want some sorrow more, or so love life?

AMPHITRUON.

I both enjoy life, and love hopes beside.

MEGARA.

And I; but hope against hope — no, old man!

AMPHITRUON.

In these delayings of an ill lurks cure.

MEGARA.

But bitter is the meantime, and it bites.

AMPHITRUON.

O there may be a run before the wind
From out these present ills, for me and thee,

Daughter, and yet may come my son, thy spouse!

But hush! and from the children take away

Their founts a flow with tears, and talk them calm,

Steal them by stories — sad theft, all the same!

For, human troubles — they grow weary too;

Neither the wind-blasts always have their strength

Nor happy men keep happy to the end:
Since all things change — their natures part in twain;

And that man's bravest, therefore, who hopes on,

Hopes ever: to despair is coward-like.

CHOROS.

These domes that overroof,
This long-used couch, I come to, having made

A staff my prop, that song may put to proof

The swan-like power, age-whitened, — poet's aid

Of sobbed-forth dirges — words that stand aloof

From action now: such am I — just a shade

With night for all its face, a mere night-dream —

And words that tremble too: howe'er they seem,

Devoted words, I deem.

O, of a father ye unfathered ones,
O thou old man, and thou whose groaning stuns —

Unhappy mother — only us above,
Nor reaches him below in Haides' realm,

thy love!

— (Faint not too soon, urge forward foot and limb

Way-weary, nor lose courage — as some horse

Yoked to the car whose weight recoils on him

Just at the rock-ridge that concludes his course!

Take by the hand, the peplos, anyone
Whose foothold fails him, printless and fordone!

Aged, assist along me aged too,
Who, — mate with thee in toils when life was new,

And shields and spears first made acquaintanceship, —

Stood by thyself and proved no bastard-slip

Of fatherland when loftiest glory grew.) —

See now, how like the sire's
Each eyeball fiercely fires!

What though ill-fortune have not left his race?

Neither is gone the grand paternal grace!
Hellas! O what — what combatants, destroyed

In these, wilt thou one day seek — seek, and find all void!

Pause! for I see the ruler of this land,
Lukos, now passing through the palace-gate.

LUKOS.

The Herakleian couple — father, wife —
If needs I must, I question: "must" forsooth?

Being your master — all I please, I ask.

To what time do you seek to spin out life?
What hope, what help see, so as not to die?

Is it you trust the sire of these, that's sunk
In Haides, will return? How past the pitch,

Suppose you have to die, you pile the woe —

Thou, casting, Hellas through, thy empty vaunts

As though Zeus helped thee to a god for son;

And thou, that thou wast styled our best man's wife!

Where was the awful in his work wound up,

If he did quell and quench the marshy snake

Or the Nemeian monster whom he snared

And — says, by throttlings of his arm, he slew?

With these do you outwrestle me? Such feats

Shall save from death the sons of Herakles
Who got praise, being nought, for bravery

In wild-beast-battle, otherwise a blank?
No man to throw on left arm buckler's weight,

Not he, nor get in spear's reach! bow he bore —

True coward's-weapon: shoot first and then fly!

No bow-and-arrow proves a man is brave,

But who keeps rank, — stands, one unwinking stare

As, plunging up, the darts come, — brave is he.

My action has no impudence, old man! Providence, rather: for I own I slew Kreon, this woman's sire, and have his seat.

Nowise I wish, then, to leave, these grown up,

Avengers on me, payment for my deeds.

AMPHITRUON.

As to the part of Zeus in his own child, Let Zeus defend that! As to mine, 'tis me

10 The care concerns to show by argument The folly of this fellow, — Herakles, Whom I stand up for! since to hear thee styled —

Cowardly — that is unendurable.

First then, the infamous (for I account Amongst the words denied to human speech,

Timidity ascribed thee, Herakles!)

This I must put from thee, with gods in proof.

Zeus' thunder I appeal to, those four steeds

Whereof he also was the charioteer

120 When, having shot down the earth's Giant-growth —

(Never shaft flew but found and fitted flank)

Triumph he sang in common with the gods.

The Kentaur-race, four footed insolence — Go ask at Pholoë, vilest thou of kings,

Whom they would pick out and pronounce best man,

If not my son, "the seeming-brave," say'st thou!

But Dirphus, thy Abantid mother-town, Question her, and she would not praise, I think!

For there's no spot, where having done some good,

30 Thy country thou mightst call to witness worth.

Now, that all-wise invention, archer's-gear,

Thou blamest: hear my teaching and grow sage!

A man in armour is his armour's slave, And, mixed with rank and file that want to run,

He dies because his neighbours have lost heart.

Then, should he break his spear, no way remains

Of warding death off, — gone that body-guard,

His one and only; while, whatever folk Have the true bow-hand, — here's the one main good, —

Though he have sent ten thousand shafts 49 abroad,

Others remain wherewith the archer saves His limbs and life, too, — stands afar and wards

Away from flesh the foe that vainly stares Hurt by the viewless arrow, while himself Offers no full front to those opposite, But keeps in thorough cover: there's the point

That's capital in combat — damage foe, Yet keep a safe skin — foe not out of reach

As you are! Thus my words contrast with thine,

And such, in judging facts, our difference. 50 These children, now, why dost thou seek to slay?

What have they done thee? In a single point

I count thee wise — if, being base thyself, Thou dread'st the progeny of nobleness. Yet this bears hard upon us, all the same, If we must die — because of fear in thee —

A death 'twere fit thou suffer at our hands, Thy betters, did Zeus rightly judge us all.

If therefore thou art bent on sceptre-sway, Thyself, here — suffer us to leave the land, 60

Fugitives! nothing do by violence, Or violence thyself shalt undergo

When the gods' gale may chance to change for thee!

Alas, O land of Kadmos, — for 'tis thee I mean to close with, dealing out the due Revilement, — in such sort dost thou defend

Herakles and his children? Herakles Who, coming, one to all the world, against The Minuai, fought them and left Thebes an eye

Unblinded henceforth to front freedom 70 with!

Neither do I praise Hellas, nor shall brook Ever to keep in silence that I count

Towards my son, craven of cravens — her Whom it behoved go bring the young ones here

Fire, spears, arms — in exchange for seas made safe,

And cleansings of the land — his labour's price.

But fire, spears, arms, — O children, neither Thebes

Nor Hellas has them for you! 'Tis myself, A feeble friend, ye look to: nothing now

But a tongue's murmur, for the strength is 84 gone

We had once, and with age are limbs a-shake

And force a-flicker! Were I only young, Still with the mastery o'er bone and thew, Grasping first spear that came, the yellow locks

Of this insulter would I bloody so —
Should send him skipping o'er the Atlantic
bounds
Out of my arm's reach through pol-
troonery!

CHOROS.

Have not the really good folk starting-
points
For speech to purpose, — though rare
talkers they?

LUKOS.

Say thou against us words thou towerest
with!

I, for thy words, will deal thee blows, their
due.

Go, some to Helikon, to Parnasos
Some, and the clefts there! Bid the
woodmen fell

to Oak-trunks, and, when the same are
brought inside

The city, pile the altar round with logs,
Then fire it, burn the bodies of them all,
That they may learn thereby, no dead man
rules

The land here, but 'tis I, by acts like these!
As for you, old sirs, who are set against
My judgments, you shall groan for — not
alone

The Herakleian children, but the fate
Of your own house beside, when faring ill
By any chance: and you shall recollect
to Slaves are you of a tyranny that's mine!

CHOROS.

O progeny of earth, — whom Ares sowed
When he laid waste the dragon's greedy
jaw —

Will ye not lift the staves, right-hand sup-
ports,

And bloody this man's irreligious head?
Who, being no Kadmeian, rules, — the
wretch, —

Our easy youth: an interloper too!
But not of me, at least, shalt thou enjoy
Thy lordship ever; nor my labour's
fruit, —

Hand worked so hard for, — have!
A curse with thee,

30 Whence thou didst come, there go and
tyrannise!

For never while I live shalt thou destroy
The Herakleian children: not so deep
Hides he below ground, leaving thee their
lord!

But we bear both of you in mind, — that
thou,

The land's destroyer, dost possess the
land,

While he who saved it, loses every right.
I play the busybody — for I serve

My dead friends when they need friends'
service most?

O right-hand, how thou yearnest to snatch
spear
And serve indeed! in weakness dies the 40
wish,
Or I had stayed thee calling me a slave,
And nobly drawn my breath at home in
Thebes
Where thou exultest! — city that's insane,
Sick through sedition and bad government,
Else never had she gained for master —
thee!

MEGARA.

Old friends, I praise you: since a righteous
wrath

For friend's sake well becomes a friend.
But no!

On our account in anger with your lord,
Suffer no injury! Hear my advice,
Amphitruon, if I seem to speak aright. 50
O yes, I love my children! how not love
What I brought forth, what toiled for? and
to die —

Sad I esteem too; still, the fated way
Who stiffens him against, that man I count
Poor creature; us, who are of other mood,
Since we must die, behoves us meet our
death

Not burnt to cinders, giving foes the
laugh —

To me, worse ill than dying, that! We
owe

Our houses many a brave deed, now to
pay.

Thee, indeed, gloriously men estimate 60
For spear-work, so that unendurable
Were it that thou shouldst die a death of
shame.

And for my glorious husband, where wants
he

A witness that he would not save his boys
If touched in their good fame thereby?
Since birth

Bears ill with baseness done for children's
sake,

My husband needs must be my pattern
here.

See now thy hope — how much I count
thereon!

Thou thinkest that thy son will come to
light:

And, of the dead, who came from Haides 70
back?

But we with talk this man might mollify:
Never! Of all foes, fly the foolish one!
Wise, well-bred people, make concession
to!

Sooner you meet respect by speaking soft.
Already it was in my mind — perchance
We might beg off these children's banish-
ment;

But even that is sad, involving them
In safety, ay — and piteous poverty!
Since the host's visage for the flying friend

Has, only one day, the sweet look, 'tis said.
Dare with us death, which waits thee,
dared or no!
We call on thine ancestral worth, old man!
For who outlabours what the gods appoint
Shows energy, but energy gone mad.
Since what must — none e'er makes what
must not be.

CHOROS.

Had anyone, while yet my arms were
strong,
Been scorning thee, he easily had ceased.
But we are nought, now; thine henceforth
to see —
10 Amphitruon, how to push aside these fates!

AMPHITRUON.

Nor cowardice nor a desire of life
Stops me from dying: but I seek to save
My son his children. Vain! I set my
heart,
It seems, upon impossibility.
See, it is ready for the sword, this throat
To pierce, divide, dash down from preci-
pice!
But one grace grant us, king, we suppli-
cate!
Slay me and this unhappy one before
The children, lest we see them — impious
sight! —
20 Gasping the soul forth, calling all the while
On mother and on father's father! Else,
Do as thy heart inclines thee! No re-
source
Have we from death, and we resign our-
selves.

MEGARA.

And I too supplicate: add grace to grace,
And, though but one man, doubly serve us
both!
Let me bestow adornment of the dead
Upon these children! Throw the palace
wide!
For now we are shut out. Thence these
shall share
At least so much of wealth was once their
sire's!

LUKOS.

30 These things shall be. Withdraw the
bolts, I bid
My servants! Enter and adorn your-
selves!
I grudge no peploi; but when these ye
wind
About your bodies, — that adornment
done, —
Then I shall come and give you to the grave.

MEGARA.

O children, follow this unhappy foot,
Your mother's, into your ancestral home,

Where others have the power, are lords in
truth,
Although the empty name is left us yet!

AMPHITRUON.

O Zeus, in vain I had thee marriage-mate,
In vain I called thee father of my child! 40
Thou wast less friendly far than thou didst
seem.

I, the mere man, o'ermatch in virtue thee
The mighty god: for I have not betrayed
The Herakleian children, — whereas thou
Hadst wit enough to come clandestinely
Into the chamber, take what no man gave,
Another's place; and when it comes to help
Thy loved ones, there thou lackest wit
indeed!

Thou art some stupid god or born unjust.

CHOROS.

Even a dirge, can Phoibos suit 50
In song to music jubilant
For all its sorrow: making shoot
His golden plectron o'er the lute,
Melodious ministrant.
And I, too, am of mind to raise,
Despite the imminence of doom,
A song of joy, outpour my praise
To him — what is it rumour says? —
Whether — now buried in the ghostly
gloom
Below ground, — he was child of Zeus 60
indeed,
Or mere Amphitruon's mortal seed —
To him I weave the wreath of song, his
labour's meed.
For, is my hero perished in the feat?
The virtues of brave toils, in death com-
plete,
These save the dead in song, — their
glory-garland meet!

First, then, he made the wood
Of Zeus a solitude,
Slaying its lion-tenant; and he spread
The tawiness behind — his yellow head
Enmuffled by the brute's, backed by 70
that grin of dread.
The mountain-roving savage Kentaur-race
He strewed with deadly bow about their
place,
Slaying with winged shafts: Peneios knew,
Beauteously-eddyng, and the long tracts
too
Of pasture trampled fruitless, and as well
Those desolated haunts Mount Pelion
under,
And, grassy up to Homolé, each dell
Whence, having filled their hands with
pine-tree plunder,
Horse-like was wont to prance from, and
subdue
The land of Thessaly, that bestial crew. 80

The golden-headed spot-back'd stag he
slew,
That robber of the rustics: glorified
Therewith the goddess who in hunter's
pride

Slaughters the game along Oinoë's side.
And, yoked abreast, he brought the
chariot-breed

To pace submissive to the bit, each steed
That in the bloody cribs of Diomede
Champed and, unbridled, hurried down
that gore

For grain, exultant the dread feast be-
fore —

10 Of man's flesh: hideous feeders they of
yore!

All as he crossed the Hebros' silver-flow
Accomplished he such labour, toiling so
For Mukenaian tyrant; ay, and more —
He crossed the Melian shore
And, by the sources of Amauros, shot
To death that strangers'-pest
Kuknos, who dwelt in Amphanaia: not
Of fame for good to guest!

And next, to the melodious maids he came,
20 Inside the Hesperian court-yard: hand
must aim

At plucking gold fruit from the appled
leaves,

Now he had killed the dragon, backed like
flame,

Who guards the unapproachable he weaves
Himself all round, one spire about the
same.

And into those sea-troughs of ocean dived
The hero, and for mortals calm contrived,
Whatever oars should follow in his wake.
And under heaven's mid-seat his hands
thrust he,

At home with Atlas: and, for valour's sake,
30 Held the gods up their star-faced man-
sionry.

Also, the rider-host of Amazons
About Maiotis many-streamed, he went
To conquer through the billowy Euxin
once,

Having collected what an armament
Of friends from Hellas, all on conquest bent
Of that gold-garnished cloak, dread girdle-
chase!

So Hellas gained the girl's barbarian grace
And at Mukenai saves the trophy still —
Go wonder there, who will!

40 And the ten thousand-headed hound
Of many a murder, the Lernaian snake
He burned out, head by head, and cast
around

His darts a poison thence, — darts soon to
slake

Their rage in that three-bodied herdsman's
gore

Of Erutheia. Many a running more

He made for triumph and felicity,
And, last of toils, to Haides, never dry
Of tears, he sailed: and there he, luckless,
ends

His life completely, nor returns again.
The house and home are desolate of friends, 50
And where the children's life-path leads
them, plain

I see, — no step retraceable, no god
Availing, and no law to help the lost!
The oar of Charon marks their period,
Waits to end all. Thy hands, these roofs
accost! —

To thee, though absent, look their utter-
most!

But if in youth and strength I flourished
still,
Still shook the spear in fight, did power
match will

In these Kadmeian co-mates of my age,
They would, — and I, — when warfare 60
was to wage,

Stand by these children; but I am bereft
Of youth now, lone of that good genius
left!

But hist, desist! for here come these, —
Draped as the dead go, under and over, —
Children long since, — now hard to dis-
cover, —

Of the once so potent Herakles!
And the loved wife dragging, in one tether
About her feet, the boys together;
And the hero's aged sire comes last!

Unhappy that I am! Of tears which 70
rise, —

How am I all unable to hold fast,
Longer, the aged fountains of these eyes!

MEGARA.

Be it so! Who is priest, who butcher here
Of these ill-fated ones, or stops the breath
Of me, the miserable? Ready, see,
The sacrifice — to lead where Haides lives!
O children, we are led — no lovely team
Of corpses — age, youth, motherhood, all
mixed!

O sad fate of myself and these my sons
Whom with these eyes I look at, this last 80
time!

I, indeed, bore you: but for enemies
I brought you up to be a laughing-stock,
Matter for merriment, destruction-stuff!
Woe's me!

Strangely indeed my hopes have struck me
down

From what I used to hope about you
once —

The expectation from your father's talk:
For thee, now, thy dead sire dealt Argos to:
Thou wast to have Eurustheus' house one
day,

And rule Pelasgia where the fine fruits
grow;

And, for a stole of state, he wrapped about
Thy head with that the lion-monster bore,
That which himself went wearing armour-
wise.

And thou wast King of Thebes — such
chariots there!

Those plains I had for portion — all for
thee,

As thou hadst coaxed them out of who gave
birth

To thee, his boy: and into thy right hand
He thrust the guardian-club of Daïdalos, —
Poor guardian proves the gift that plays
thee false!

10 And upon thee he promised to bestow
Oichalia — what, with those far-shooting
shafts,

He ravaged once; and so, since three you
were,

With threefold kingdoms did he build you
up

To very towers, your father, — proud
enough

Prognosticating, from your manliness
In boyhood, what the manhood's self would
be.

For my part, I was picking out for you
Brides, suiting each with his alliance —
this

From Athens, this from Sparté, this from
Thebes —

20 Whence, suited — as stern-cables steady
ship —

You might have hold on life gods bless.
All gone!

Fortune turns round and gives us — you,
the Fates

Instead of brides — me, tears for nuptial
baths,

Unhappy in my hoping! And the sire
Of your sire — he prepares the marriage-
feast

Befitting Haides who plays father now —
Bitter relationship! Oh me! which first —
Which last of you shall I to bosom fold?
To whom shall I fit close, his mouth to
mine?

30 Of whom shall I lay hold and ne'er let go?
How would I gather, like the brown-winged
bee,

The groans from all, and, gathered into
one,

Give them you back again, a crowded tear!
Dearest, if any voice be heard of men
Dungeoned in Haides, thee — to thee I
speak!

Here is thy father dying, and thy boys!
And I too perish, famed as fortunate
By mortals once, through thee! Assist
them! Come!

But come! though just a shade, appear to
me!

40 For, coming, thy ghost-grandeur would
suffice,

Such cowards are they in thy presence,
these

Who kill thy children now thy back is
turned!

AMPHITRUON.

Ay, daughter, bid the powers below assist!
But I will rather, raising hand to heaven,
Call thee to help, O Zeus, if thy intent
Be, to these children, helpful anyway,
Since soon thou wilt be valueless enough!
And yet thou hast been called and called;
in vain

I labour: for we needs must die, it seems.
Well, aged brothers — life's a little thing! 5
Such as it is, then, pass life pleasantly
From day to night, nor once grieve all the
while!

Since Time concerns him not about our
hopes, —

To save them, — but his own work done,
flies off.

Witness myself, looked up to among men,
Doing noteworthy deeds! when here comes
fate

Lifts me away, like feather skyward borne,
In one day! Riches then and glory, —
whom

These are found constant to, I know not.
Friends,

Farewell! the man who loved you all so 6
much,

Now, this last time, my mates, ye look
upon!

MEGARA.

Ha!
O father, do I see my dearest? Speak!

AMPHITRUON.

No more than thou canst, daughter —
dumb like thee!

MEGARA.

Is this he whom we heard was under
ground?

AMPHITRUON.

Unless at least some dream in day we see!

MEGARA.

What do I say? what dreams insanely
view?

This is no other than thy son, old sire!
Here, children! hang to these paternal
robes,

Quick, haste, hold hard on him, since 7
here's your true

Zeus that can save — and every whit as
well.

HERAKLES.

O hail, my palace, my hearth's propula, —
How glad I see thee as I come to light!

Ha, what means this? My children I
behold

Before the house in garments of the grave,
Chapleted, and, amid a crowd of men,
My very wife — my father weeping too,
Whatever the misfortune! Come, best
take

My station nearer these and learn it all!
Wife, what new sorrow has approached
our home?

MEGARA.

O dearest! light flashed on thy father
now!

Art thou come? art thou saved and dost
thou fall

On friends in their supreme extremity?

HERAKLES.

How say'st thou? Father! what's the
trouble here?

MEGARA.

Undone are we! — but thou, old man,
forgive

If first I snatch what thou shouldst say to
him!

For somehow womanhood wakes pity
more.

Here are my children killed and I undone!

HERAKLES.

Apollon, with what preludes speech begins!

MEGARA.

Dead are my brothers and old father too.

HERAKLES.

How say'st thou? — doing what? — by
spear-stroke whence?

MEGARA.

Lukos destroyed them — the land's noble
king!

HERAKLES.

Met them in arms? or through the land's
disease?

MEGARA.

Sedition: and he sways seven-gated
Thebes.

HERAKLES.

Why then came fear on the old man and
thee?

MEGARA.

He meant to kill thy father, me, our boys.

HERAKLES.

How say'st thou? Fearing what from
orphanage?

MEGARA.

Lest they should some day pay back
Kreon's death.

HERAKLES.

And why trick out the boys corpse-fashion
thus?

MEGARA.

These wraps of death we have already
donned.

HERAKLES.

And you had died through violence?
Woe's me!

MEGARA.

Left bare of friends: and thou wast dead,
we heard.

HERAKLES.

And whence came on you this fainthearted-
ness?

MEGARA.

The heralds of Eurustheus brought the 30
news.

HERAKLES.

And why was it you left my house and
hearth?

MEGARA.

Forced thence; thy father — from his
very couch!

HERAKLES.

And no shame at insulting the old man?

MEGARA.

Shame, truly! no near neighbours *he* and
Shame!

HERAKLES.

And so much, in my absence, lacked I
friends?

MEGARA.

Friends, — are there any to a luckless
man?

HERAKLES.

The Minuai-war I waged, — they spa-
forth these?

MEGARA.

Friendless, — again I tell thee, — is ill-
luck.

HERAKLES.

Will not you cast these hell-wraps from
your hair

And look on light again, and with your 40
eyes

Taste the sweet change from nether dark
to-day?

While I — for now there needs my handi-
work —

First I shall go, demolish the abodes
Of these new lordships; next hew off the
head

Accurst and toss it for the dogs to trail.

Then, such of the Kadmeians as I find
Were craven though they owed me grati-
tude, —

Some I intend to handle with this club
Renowned for conquest; and with winged
shafts

Scatter the others, fill Ismenos full
With bloody corpses, — Dirké's flow so
white

Shall be incarnadined. For, whom, I
pray,

Behoves me rather help than wife and child
And aged father? Farewell, "Labours"
mine!

10 Vainly I wrought them: my true work lay
here!

My business is to die defending these, —
If for their father's sake they meant to die.
Or how shall we call brave the battling it
With snake and lion, as Eurustheus bade,
If yet I must not labour death away
From my own children? "Conquering
Herakles"

Folk will not call me as they used, I think!
The right thing is for parents to assist
Children, old age, the partner of the couch.

AMPHITRUON.

20 True, son! thy duty is — be friend to
friends

And foe to foes: yet — no more haste than
needs!

HERAKLES.

Why, father, what is over hasty here?

AMPHITRUON.

Many a pauper, — seeming to be rich,
As the word goes, — the king calls partisan.
Such made a riot, ruined Thebes to rob
Their neighbour: for, what good they had
at home

Was spent and gone — flew off through
idleness.

You came to trouble Thebes, they saw:
since seen,

Beware lest, raising foes, a multitude,

30 You stumble where you apprehend no
harm.

HERAKLES.

If all Thebes saw me, not a whit care I.
But seeing as I did a certain bird
Not in the lucky seats, I knew some woe
Was fallen upon the house: so, purposely,
By stealth I made my way into the land.

AMPHITRUON.

And now, advancing, hail the hearth with
praise

And give the ancestral home thine eye to
see!

For he himself will come, thy wife and sons

To drag-forth — slaughter — slay me too,
— this king!

But, here remaining, all succeeds with 40
thee —

Gain lost by no false step. So, this thy
town

Disturb not, son, ere thou right matters
here!

HERAKLES.

Thus will I do, for thou say'st well; my
home

Let me first enter! Since at the due time
Returning from the unsunned depths

where dwells
Haides' wife Koré, let me not affront
Those gods beneath my roof I first should

hail!

AMPHITRUON.

For didst thou really visit Haides, son?

HERAKLES.

Ay — dragged to light, too, his three-
headed beast.

AMPHITRUON.

By fight didst conquer, or through Koré's 50
gift?

HERAKLES.

Fight: well for me, I saw the Orgies first!

AMPHITRUON.

And is he in Eurustheus' house, the brute?

HERAKLES.

Chthonía's grove, Hermion's city, hold
him now.

AMPHITRUON.

Does not Eurustheus know thee back on
earth?

HERAKLES.

No: I would come first and see matters
here.

AMPHITRUON.

But how wast thou below ground such a
time?

HERAKLES.

I stopped, from Haides, bringing Theseus
up.

AMPHITRUON.

And where is he? — bound o'er the plain
for home?

HERAKLES.

Gone glad to Athens — Haides' fugitive!
But, up, boys! follow father into house! 60

There's a far better going-in for you
Truly, than going-out was! Nay, take heart.

And let the eyes no longer run and run!
And thou, O wife, my own, collect thy soul
Nor tremble now! Leave grasping, all of
you,
My garments! I'm not winged, nor fly
from friends!

Ah, —
No letting go for these, who all the more
Hang to my garments! Did you foot
indeed

The razor's edge? Why, then I'll carry
them —

Take with my hands these small craft up,
and tow

10 Just as a ship would. There! don't fear
I shirk

My children's service! this way, men are
men,

No difference! best and worst, they love
their boys

After one fashion: wealth they differ in —
Some have it, others not; but each and
all

Combine to form the children-loving race.

CHOROS.

Youth is a pleasant burthen to me;
But age on my head, more heavily
Than the crags of Aitna, weighs and weighs,
And darkening cloaks the lids and inter-
cepts the rays.

20 Never be mine the preference
Of an Asian empire's wealth, nor yet
Of a house all gold, to youth, to youth
That's beauty, whatever the gods dispense!
Whether in wealth we joy, or fret
Paupers, — of all God's gifts most beau-
tiful, in truth!

But miserable murderous age I hate!
Let it go to wreck, the waves adown,
Nor ever by rights plague tower or town
Where mortals bide, but still elate
30 With wings, on ether, precipitate,
Wander them round — nor wait!

But if the gods, to man's degree,
Had wit and wisdom, they would bring
Mankind a twofold youth, to be
Their virtue's sign-mark, all should see,
In those with whom life's winter thus grew
spring.

For when they died, into the sun once more
Would they have traversed twice life's
race-course o'er;

40 While ignobility had simply run
Existence through, nor second life begun.
And so might we discern both bad and good
As surely as the starry multitude
Is numbered by the sailors, one and one.
But now the gods by no apparent line
Limit the worthy and the base define;
Only, a certain period rounds, and so
Brings man more wealth, — but youthful
vigour, no!

Well, I am not to pause
Mingling together—wine and wine in cup—
The Graces with the Muses up — 5c
Most dulcet marriage: loosed from music's
laws,

No life for me!

But where the wreaths abound, there ever
may I be!

And still, an aged bard, I shout Mnemo-
suné —

Still chant of Herakles the triumph-chant,
Companioned by the seven-stringed tor-
toise shell

And Libuan flute, and Bromios' self as well,
God of the grape, with man participant!
Not yet will we arrest their glad advance —

The Muses who so long have led me forth 60
to dance!

A paian — hymn the Delian girls indeed,
Weaving a beauteous measure in and out
His temple-gates, Latona's goodly seed;
And paians — I too, these thy domes
about,

From these grey cheeks, my king, will
swan-like shout —

Old songster! Ay, in song it starts off
brave —

"Zeus' son is he!" and yet, such grace of
birth

Surpassing far, to man his labours gave
Existence, one calm flow without a wave,
Having destroyed the beasts, the terrors 70
of the earth.

LUKOS.

From out the house Amphitruon comes —
in time!

For 'tis a long while now since ye bedecked
Your bodies with the dead-folk's finery.
But, quick! the boys and wife of Herakles—
Bid them appear outside this house, keep
part

To die, and need no bidding but your own!

AMPHITRUON.

King! you press hard on me sore-pressed
enough,

And give me scorn — beside my dead ones
here.

Meet in such matters were it, though you
reign,

To temper zeal with moderation. Since 80
You do impose on us the need to die —

Needs must we love our lot, obey your will.

LUKOS.

Where's Megara, then? Alkmené's grand-
sons, where?

AMPHITRUON.

She, I think, — as one figures from out-
side, —

LUKOS.

Well, this same thinking, — what affords
its ground?

AMPHITRUON.

— Sits suppliant on the holy altar-steps, —

LUKOS.

Idly indeed a suppliant to save life!

AMPHITRUON.

— And calls on her dead husband, vainly
too!

LUKOS.

For he's not come, nor ever will arrive.

AMPHITRUON.

Never — at least, if no god raise him up.

LUKOS.

Go to her, and conduct her from the house!

AMPHITRUON.

I should partake the murder, doing that.

LUKOS.

We, — since thou hast a scruple in the
case, —

10 Outside of fears, we shall march forth
these lads, —

Mother and all. Here, follow me, my
folk —

And gladly so remove what stops our toils!

AMPHITRUON.

Thou — go then! March where needs
must! What remains —

Perhaps concerns another. Doing ill,
Expect some ill be done thee!

Ha, old friends!

On he strides beautifully! in the toils

O' the net, where swords spring forth, will
he be fast —

Minded to kill his neighbours — the arch-
knave!

I go, too — I must see the falling corpse!

20 For he has sweets to give — a dying man,
Your foe, that pays the price of deeds he
did.

CHOROS.

Troubles are over! He the great king once
Turns the point, tends for Haides, goal of
life!

O justice, and the gods' back-flowing fate!

AMPHITRUON.

Thou art come, late indeed, where death
pays crime —

These insults heaped on better than thyself!

CHOROS.

Joy gives this outburst to my tears! Again
Come round those deeds, his doing, which
of old

He never dreamed himself was to endure —
King of the country! But enough, old 31
man!

Indoors, now, let us see how matters
stand —

If somebody be faring as I wish!

LUKOS.

Ah me — me!

CHOROS.

This strikes the keynote — music to my
mind,

Merry i' the household! Death takes up
the tune!

The king gives voice, groans murder's
prelude well!

LUKOS.

O, all the land of Kadmos! slain by guile!

CHOROS.

Ay, for who slew first? Paying back thy
due,

Resign thee! make, for deeds done, mere
amends!

Who was it grazed the gods through law- 40
lessness —

Mortal himself, threw up his fool's-conceit
Against the blessed heavenly ones — as
though

Gods had no power? Old friends, the
impious man

Exists not any more! The house is mute.
Turn we to song and dance! For, those

I love,
Those I wish well to, well fare they, to
wish!

Dances, dances and banqueting

To Thebes, the sacred city through,

Are a care! for, change and change

Of tears to laughter, old to new,

Our lays, glad birth, they bring, they bring! 50

He is gone and past, the mighty king!

And the old one reigns, returned — O

strange!

From the Acherontian harbour too!
Advent of hope, beyond thought's widest

range!

To the gods, the gods, are crimes a care,

And they watch our virtue, well aware

That gold and that prosperity drive man

Out of his mind — those charioteers who

hale

Might-without-right behind them: face 60
who can

Fortune's reverse which time prepares.

nor quail?

— He who evades law and in lawlessness
Delights him, — he has broken down his
trust —

The chariot, riches haled — now blacken-
ing in the dust!

Ismenos, go thou garlanded!
Break into dance, ye ways, the polished bed
O' the seven-gated city! Dirké, thou
Fair-flowing, with the Asopiad sisters all,
Leave your sire's stream, attend the festi-
val

Of Herakles, one choir of nymphs, sing
triumph now!

10 O woody rock of Puthios¹ and each home
O' the Helikonian Muses, ye shall come
With joyous shouting to my walls, my
town

Where saw the light that Spartan race,
those "Sown,"

Brazen-shield-bearing chiefs, whercof the
band

With children's children renovates our
land,

To Thebes a sacred light!

O combination of the marriage rite —
Bed of the mortal-born and Zeus, who
couched

Beside the nymph of Perscus' progeny!

20 For credible, past hope, becomes to me
That nuptial story long ago avouched,
O Zeus! and time has turned the dark to
bright,

And made one blaze of truth the Hera-
kleidan might —

His, who emerged from earth's pavilion,
left

Plouton's abode, the nether palace-cleft.
Thou wast the lord that nature gave me —
not

That baseness born and bred — my king,
by lot!

— Baseness made plain to all, who now
regard

The match of sword with sword in fight, —

30 If to the gods the Just and Right
Still pleasing be, still claim the palm's
award.

Horror!

Are we come to the self-same passion of
fear,

Old friends? — such a phantasm fronts me
here

Visible over the palace-roof!

In flight, in flight, the laggard limb

Bestir! and haste aloof

From that on the roof there — grand and
grim!

O Paian, king!

40 Be thou my safeguard from the woeful
thing!

¹ Surname of Apollo.

IRIS.

Courage, old men! beholding here —
Night's birth —

Madness, and me the handmaid of the gods,
Iris since to your town we come, no
plague —

Wage war against the house of but one man
From Zeus and from Alkmené sprung, they
say.

Now, till he made an end of bitter toils,
Fate kept him safe, nor did his father Zeus
Let us once hurt him, Heré nor myself.

But, since he has toiled through Eurus-
theus' task,

Heré desires to fix fresh blood on him — 50
Slaying his children: I desire it too.

Up then, collecting the unsoftened heart,
Unwedded virgin of black Night! Drive,
drag

Frenzy upon the man here — whirls of
brain

Big with child-murder, while his feet leap
gay!

Let go the bloody cable its whole length!

So that, — when o'er the Acherousian ford

He has sent floating, by self-homicide,

His beautiful boy-garland, — he may know

First, Heré's anger, what it is to him, 60

And then learn mine. The gods are vile

indeed

And mortal matters vast, if he 'scape free!

MADNESS.

Certes, from well-born sire and mother too
Had I my birth, whose blood is Night's and

Heaven's;

But here's my glory, — not to grudge the
good!

Nor love I raids against the friends of man.

I wish, then, to persuade, — before I see

You stumbling, you and Heré! trust my

words!

This man, the house of whom ye hound

me to,

Is not unfamed on earth nor gods among; 70

Since, having quelled waste land and

savage sea,

He alone raised again the falling rights

Of gods — gone ruinous through impious

men.

Desire no mighty mischief, I advise!

IRIS.

Give thou no thought to Heré's faulty
schemes!

MADNESS.

Changing her step from faulty to fault-free!

IRIS.

Not to be wise, did Zeus' wife send thee
here.

MADNESS.

Sun, thee I cite to witness — doing what I
loathe to do!
But since indeed to Heré and thyself I must
subserve,
And follow you quick, with a whizz, as the
hounds a-hunt with the huntsman,
— Go I will! and neither the sea, as it
groans with its waves so furiously,
Nor earthquake, no, nor the bolt of thun-
der gasping out heaven's labour-throe,
Shall cover the ground as I, at a bound,
rush into the bosom of Herakles!
And home I scatter, and house I batter,
Having first of all made the children fall, —
And he who felled them is never to know
10 He gave birth to each child that received
the blow,
Till the Madness, I am, have let him go!

Ha, behold! already he rocks his head —
he is off from the starting-place!
Not a word, as he rolls his frightful orbs,
from their sockets wrenched in the
ghastly race!
And the breathings of him he tempers and
times no more than a bull in act to toss,
And hideously he bellows invoking the
Keres, daughters of Tartaros.
Ay, and I soon will dance thee madder, and
pipe thee quite out of thy mind with
fear!
So, up with the famous foot, thou Iris,
march to Olumpus, leave me here!
Me and mine, who now combine, in the
dreadful shape no mortal sees,
And now are about to pass, from without,
inside of the home of Herakles!

CHOROS.

20 Otototoi, — groan!
Away is mown
Thy flower, Zeus' offspring, City!
Unhappy Hellas, who dost cast (the pity!)
Who worked thee all the good,
Away from thee, — destroyest in a mood
Of madness him, to death whom pipings
dance!
There goes she, in her chariot, — groans,
her brood, —
And gives her team the goad, as though
adrift
For doom, Night's Gorgon, Madness, she
whose glance
30 Turns man to marble! with what hissings
lift
Their hundred heads the snakes, her
head's inheritance!
Quick has the god changed fortune:
through their sire
Quick will the children, that he saved,
expire!
O miserable me! O Zeus! thy child —

Childless himself — soon vengeance, hun-
ger-wild,
Craving for punishment, will lay how low —
Loaded with many a woe!

O palace-roofs! your courts about,
A measure begins all unrejoiced
By the tympanies and the thyrsos hoist 44
Of the Bromian revel-rout!
O ye domes! and the measure proceeds
For blood, not such as the cluster bleeds
Of the Dionusian pouring-out!

Break forth, fly, children! fatal this —
Fatal the lay that is piped, I wis!
Ay, for he hunts a children-chase —
Never shall Madness lead her revel
And leave no trace in the dwelling-place!
Ai ai, because of the evil! 50
Ai ai, the old man — how I groan
For the father, and not the father alone!
She who was nurse of his children, —
small
Her gain that they ever were born at all!

See! See!
A whirlwind shakes hither and thither
The house — the roof falls in together!
Ha, ha, what dost thou, son of Zeus?
A trouble of Tartaros broke loose,
Such as once Pallas on the Titan thun- 60
dered,
Thou sendest on thy domes, roof-shattered
and wall-sundered!

MESSENGER.

O bodies white with age! —

CHOROS.

What cry, to me —
What, dost thou call with?

MESSENGER.

There's a curse-indoors.

CHOROS.

I shall not bring a prophet: you suffice.

MESSENGER.

Dead are the children.

CHOROS.

Ai ai!

MESSENGER.

Groan! for, groans
Suit well the subject. Dire the children's
death,
Dire too the parent's hands that dealt the
fate.
No one could tell worse woe than we have
borne.

CHOROS.

How dost thou that same curse — curse,
 cause for groan —
 The father's on the children, make appear?
 Tell in what matter they were hurled from
 heaven
 Against the house — these evils; and
 recount
 The children's hapless fate, O Messenger!

MESSENGER.

The victims were before the hearth of Zeus,
 A household-expiation: since the king
 O' the country, Herakles had killed and
 cast
 From out the dwelling; and a beauteous
 choir
 Of boys stood by his sire, too, and his wife.
 And now the basket had been carried round
 The altar in a circle, and we used
 The consecrated speech. Alkmené's son, —
 Just as he was about, in his right hand,
 To bear the torch, that he might dip into
 The cleansing-water, — came to a stand-
 still;
 And, as their father yet delayed, his boys
 Had their eyes on him. But he was himself
 No longer: lost in rollings of the eyes;
 Outthrusting eyes — their very roots —
 like blood!
 Froth he dropped down his bushy-bearded
 cheek,
 And said — together with a madman's
 laugh —
 "Father! why sacrifice, before I slay
 Eurustheus? why have twice the lustral
 fire,
 And double pains, when 'tis permitted me
 To end, with one good hand-sweep, matters
 here?
 Then, — when I hither bring Eurustheus'
 head, —
 Then for these just slain, wash hands once
 for all!
 Now, — cast drink-offerings forth, throw
 baskets down!
 Who gives me bow and arrows, who my
 club?
 I go to that Mukanai. One must match
 Crowbars and mattocks, so that — those
 sunk stones
 The Kuklops squared with picks and
 plumb-line red —
 I, with my bent steel, may o'ertumble
 town."
 Which said, he goes and — with no car to
 have —
 Affirms he has one! mounts the chariot-
 board,
 And strikes, as having really goad in hand!
 And two ways laughed the servants —
 laugh with awe;
 And one said, as each met the other's stare,

"Playing us boys' tricks? or is master 40
 mad?"

But up he climbs, and down along the roof,
 And, dropping into the men's place, main-
 tains

He's come to Nisos city, when he's come
 Only inside his own house! then reclines
 On floor, for couch, and, as arrived indeed,
 Makes himself supper; goes through some
 brief stay,

Then says he's traversing the forest-flats
 Of Isthmos; thereupon lays body bare
 Of bucklings, and begins a contest with
 — No one! and is proclaimed the con- 50
 queror —

He by himself — having called out to hear
 — Nobody! Then, if you will take his
 word,

Blaring against Eurustheus horribly,
 He's at Mukanai. But his father laid
 Hold of the strong hand and addressed
 him thus:

"O son, what ails thee? Of what sort is
 this

Extravagance? Has not some murder-
 craze,

Bred of those corpses thou didst just
 dispatch,

Danced thee drunk?" But he, — taking
 him to crouch,

Eurustheus' sire, that apprehensive touched 60
 His hand, a suppliant, — pushes him aside,
 Gets ready quiver, and bends bow against
 His children — thinking them Eurustheus'
 boys

He means to slay. They, horrified with
 fear,

Rushed here and there, — this child, into
 the robes

O' the wretched mother — this, beneath
 the shade

O' the column, — and this other, like a
 bird,

Cowered at the altar-foot. The mother
 shrieks

"Parent — what dost thou? — kill thy
 children?" So

Shriek the old sire and crowd of servitors. 70
 But he, outwinding him, as round about
 The column ran the boy, — a horrid whirl

O' the lathe his foot described! — stands
 opposite,

Strikes through the liver; and supine the
 boy

Bedews the stone shafts, breathing out his
 life.

But "Victory!" he shouted — boasted
 thus:

"Well, this one nestling of Eurustheus —
 dead —

Falls by me, pays back the paternal hate!"
 Then bends bow on another who was
 crouched

At base of altar — overlooked, he thought — 80

And now prevents him, falls at father's
knee,
Throwing up hand to beard and cheek
above.
"O dearest!" cries he; "father, kill me
not!
Yours I am — your boy: not Eurustheus'
boy
You kill now!" But he, rolling the wild
eye
Of Gorgon, — as the boys stood all too
close
For deadly bowshot, — mimicry of smith
Who batters red-hot iron, — hand o'er
head
Heaving his club, on the boy's yellow hair
10 Hurls it and breaks the bone. This
second caught, —
He goes, would slay the third, one sacrifice
He and the couple; but, beforehand here,
The miserable mother catches up,
Carries him inside house and bars the
gate.
Then he, as he were at those Kuklops'
work,
Digs at, heaves doors up, wrenches door-
posts out,
Lays wife and child low with the selfsame
shaft.
And this done, at the old man's death he
drives;
But there came, as it seemed to us who
saw,
20 A statue — Pallas with the crested head,
Swinging her spear — and threw a stone
which smote
Herakles' breast and stayed his slaughter-
rage,
And sent him safe to sleep. He falls to
ground —
Striking against the column with his
back —
Column which, with the falling of the
roof,
Broken in two, lay by the altar-base.
And we, foot-free now from our several
flights,
Along with the old man, we fastened bonds
Of rope-noose to the column, so that he,
30 Ceasing from sleep, might not go adding
deeds
To deeds done. And he sleeps a sleep,
poor wretch,
No gift of any god! since he has slain
Children and wife. For me, I do not know
What mortal has more misery to bear.

CHOROS.

A murder there was which Argolis
Holds in remembrance, Hellas through,
As, at that time, best and famous:
Of those, the daughters of Danaos slew.
A murder indeed was that! but this

Outstrips it, straight to the goal has pressed. 4
I am able to speak of a murder done
To the hapless Zeus-born offspring, too —
Prokne's son, who had but one —
Or a sacrifice to the Muses, say
Rather, who Itus sing away,
Her single child. But thou, the sire
Of children three — O thou consuming
fire! —
In one outrageous fate hast made them all
expire.
And this outrageous fate —
What groan, or wail, or deadmen's dirge, 5
Or choric dance of Hades shall I urge
The Muse to celebrate?

Woe! woe! behold!
The portalled palace lies unrolled,
This way and that way, each prodigious
fold!
Alas for me! these children, see,
Stretched, hapless group, before their
father — he
The all-unhappy, who lies sleeping out
The murder of his sons, a dreadful sleep!
And bonds, see, all about, — 6
Rope-tangle, ties and tether, — these
Tightenings around the body of Herakles
To the stone columns of the house made
fast!

But — like a bird that grieves
For callow nestlings some rude hand be-
reaves —
See, here, a bitter journey overpast,
The old man — all too late — is here at
last!

AMPHITRUON.

Silently, silently, aged Kadmeians!
Will ye not suffer my son, diffused
Yonder, to slide from his sorrows in sleep? 7

CHOROS.

And thee, old man, do I, groaning, weep,
And the children too, and the head there —
used
Of old to the wreaths and paians!

AMPHITRUON.

Farther away! Nor beat the breast,
Nor wail aloud, nor rouse from rest
The slumberer — asleep, so best!

CHOROS.

Ah me — what a slaughter!

AMPHITRUON.

Refrain — refrain!

Ye will prove my perdition.

CHOROS.

Unlike water,
Bloodshed rises from earth again.

AMPHITRUON.

Do I bid you bate your breath, in vain —
Ye elders? Lament in a softer strain!
Lest he rouse himself, burst every chain,
And bury the city in ravage — bray
Father and house to dust away!

CHOROS.

I cannot forbear — I cannot forbear!

AMPHITRUON.

Hush! I will learn his breathings: there!
I will lay my ears close.

CHOROS.

What, he sleeps?

AMPHITRUON.

Ay, — sleeps! A horror of slumber keeps
The man who has piled
On wife and child
Death and death, as he shot them down
With clang o' the bow.

CHOROS.

Wail —

AMPHITRUON.

Even so!

CHOROS.

— The fate of the children —

AMPHITRUON.

Triple woe!

CHOROS.

— Old man, the fate of thy son!

AMPHITRUON.

Hush, hush! Have done!
He is turning about!
He is breaking out!
Away! I steal
And my body conceal,
Before he arouse,
In the depths of the house.

CHOROS.

Courage! The Night
Maintains her right
On the lids of thy son there, sealed from
sight!

AMPHITRUON.

See, see! To leave the light
And, wretch that I am, bear one last ill,
I do not avoid; but if he kill
Me his own father, and devise
Beyond the present miseries
A misery more ghastly still —
And to haunt him, over and above

Those here who, as they used to love,
Now hate him, what if he have with these
My murder, the worst of Erinues?

CHOROS.

Then was the time to die, for thee,
When ready to wreak in the full degree
Vengeance on those
Thy consort's foes
Who murdered her brothers! glad, life's
close,
With the Taphiqi down,
And sacked their town
Clustered about with a wash of sea!

AMPHITRUON.

To flight — to flight!
Away from the house, troop off, old men!
Save yourselves out of the maniac's sight!
He is rousing himself right up: and then,
Murder on murder heaping anew,
He will revel in blood your city through!

CHOROS.

O Zeus, why hast, with such unmeasured
hate,
Hated thy son, whelmed in this sea of woes?

HERAKLES.

Ha, —
In breath indeed I am — see things I
ought —
Æther, and earth, and these the sunbeam-
shafts!
But then — some billow and strange whirl
of sense
I have fallen into! and breathings hot I
breathe —
Smoked upwards, not the steady work
from lungs.
See now! Why bound, — at moorings like
a ship, —
About my young breast and young arm,
to this
Stone piece of carved work broke in half,
do I
Sit, have my rest in corpses' neighbour-
hood?
Strewn on the ground are winged darts,
and bow
Which played my brother-shieldman, held
in hand, —
Guarded my side, and got my guardian-
ship!
I cannot have gone back to Haides — twice
Begun Eurustheus' race I ended thence?
But I nor see the Sisuphran stone,
Nor Plouton, nor Demeter's sceptred maid!
I am struck witless sure! Where can I be?
Ho there! what friend of mine is near or
far —
Some one to cure me of bewilderment?
For nought familiar do I recognize.

AMPHITRUON.

Old friends, shall I go close to these my woes!

CHOROS.

Ay, and let me too, — nor desert your ills!

HERAKLES.

Father, why weepest thou, and buriest up
Thine eyes, aloof so from thy much-loved
son?

AMPHITRUON.

O child! — for, faring badly, mine thou art!

HERAKLES.

Do I fare somehow ill, that tears should
flow?

AMPHITRUON.

Ill, — would cause any god who bore, to
groan!

HERAKLES.

That's boasting, truly! still, you state no
hap.

AMPHITRUON.

For, thyself seest — if in thy wits again.

HERAKLES.

10 Heyday! How riddlingly that hint returns!

AMPHITRUON.

Well, I am trying — art thou sane and
sound!

HERAKLES.

Say if thou lay'st aught strange to my life's
charge!

AMPHITRUON.

If thou no more art Haides-drunk, — I
tell!

HERAKLES.

I bring to mind no drunkenness of soul.

AMPHITRUON.

Shall I unbind my son, old men, or what?

HERAKLES.

And who was binder, tell! — not *that*, my
deed!

AMPHITRUON.

Mind that much of misfortune — pass the
rest!

HERAKLES.

Enough! from silence, I nor learn nor wish.

AMPHITRUON.

O Zeus, dost witness here throned Heré's
work?

HERAKLES.

But have I had to bear aught hostile
thence?

AMPHITRUON.

Let be the goddess — bury thine own
guilt!

HERAKLES.

Undone! What is the sorrow thou wilt
say?

AMPHITRUON.

Look! See the ruins of thy children here!

HERAKLES.

Ah me! What sight do wretched I behold?

AMPHITRUON.

Unfair fight, son, this fight thou fastenedst
On thine own children!

HERAKLES.

What fight? Who slew these?

AMPHITRUON.

Thou and thy bow, and who of gods was
cause.

HERAKLES.

How say'st? What did I? Ill-announc-
ing sire!

AMPHITRUON.

— Go mad! Thou askest a sad clearing
up.

HERAKLES.

And am I also murderer of my wife? 30

AMPHITRUON.

All the work here was just one hand's
work — thine!

HERAKLES.

Ai ai — for groans encompass me — a cloud!

AMPHITRUON.

For these deeds' sake do I begroan thy fate.

HERAKLES.

Did I break up my house or dance it down?

AMPHITRUON.

I know just one thing — all's a woe with
thee.

HERAKLES.

But where did the craze catch me? where
destroy?

AMPHITRUON.

When thou didst cleanse hands at the altar-
flame.

HERAKLES.

Ah me! why is it then I save my life —
Proved murderer of my dearest ones, my
boys?

Shall not I rush to the rock-level's leap,
Or, darting sword through breast and all,
become

My children's blood-avenger? or, this flesh
Burning away with fire, so thrust away
The infamy, which waits me there, from
life?

Ah but, — a hindrance to my purposed
death,

Theseus arrives, my friend and kinsman,
here!

10 Eyes will be on me! my child-murder-
plague

In evidence before friends loved so much!
O me, what shall I do? Where, taking
wing

Or gliding underground, shall I seek out
A solitariness from misery?

I will pull night upon my muffled head!
Let this wretch here content him with his
curse

Of blood: I would pollute no innocents.

THESEUS.

I come, — with others who await beside
Asopos' stream, the armed Athenian
youth, —

20 Bring thy son, old man, spear's fight-fellow-
ship!

For a bruit reached the Erechtheidai's
town

That, having seized the sceptre of this
realm,

Lukos prepares you battle-violence.

So, paying good back, — Herakles began,
Saving me down there, — I have come, old
man,

If aught, of my hand or my friends', you
want.

What's here? Why all these corpses on
the ground?

Am I perhaps behindhand — come too
late

For newer ill? Who killed these children
now?

30 Whose wife was she, this woman I behold?

Boys, at least, take no stand in reach of
spear!

Some other woe than war, I chance upon.

AMPHITRUON.

O thou, who sway'st the olive-bearing
height! —

THESEUS.

Why hail'st thou me with woeful prelude
thus?

AMPHITRUON.

Dire sufferings have we suffered from the
gods.

THESEUS.

These boys, — who are they thou art weep-
ing o'er?

AMPHITRUON.

He gave them birth, indeed, my hapless
son!

Begot, but killed them — dared their bloody
death.

THESEUS.

Speak no such horror!

AMPHITRUON.

Would I might obey!

THESEUS.

O teller of dread tidings!

40

AMPHITRUON.

Lost are we —

Lost — flown away from life!

THESEUS.

What sayest thou?

What did he?

AMPHITRUON.

Erring through a frenzy-fit,

He did all, with the arrows dipt in dye
Of hundred-headed Hudra.

THESEUS.

Heré's strife!

But who is this among the dead, old man?

AMPHITRUON.

Mine, mine, this progeny — the labour-
plagued,

Who went with gods once to Phlegruia's
plain,

And in the giant-slaying war bore shield.

THESEUS.

Woe — woe! What man was born mis-
chanceful thus!

AMPHITRUON.

Thou couldst not know another mortal's
man

Toil-weary, more outworn by wander-
ings,

THESEUS.

And why i' the peploi hides he his sad head?

AMPHITRUON.

Not daring meet thine eye, thy friendliness
And kinship, — nor that children's-blood
about.

THESEUS.

But *I* come to who shared my woe with
me!
Uncover him!

AMPHITRUON.

O child, put from thine eyes
The peplos, throw it off, show face to sun!
Woe's weight well matched contends with
tears in thee.

I supplicate thee, falling at thy cheek
And knee and hand, and shedding this old
tear!

10 O son, remit the savage lion's mood,
Since to a bloody, an unholy race
Art thou led forth, if thou be resolute
To go on adding ill to ill, my child!

THESEUS.

Let me speak! Thee, who sittest —
seated woe —

I call upon to show thy friends thine eye!
For there's no darkness has a cloud so black
May hide thy misery thus absolute.
Why, waving hand, dost sign me — mur-
der's done?

Lest a pollution strike me, from thy speech?

20 Nought care I to — with thee, at least —
fare ill:

For I had joy once! *Then*, — soul rises
to, —

When thou didst save me from the dead to
light!

Friends' gratitude that tastes old age, I
loathe,

And him who likes to share when things
look fine,

But, sail along with friends in trouble —
no!

Arise, uncover thine unhappy head!

Look on us! Every man of the right race
Bears what, at least, the gods inflict, nor
shrinks.

HERAKLES.

Theseus, hast seen this match — my boys
with me?

THESEUS.

30 I heard of, now I see the ills thou sign'st.

HERAKLES.

Why then hast thou displayed my head to
sun?

THESEUS.

Why? mortals bring no plague on aught
divine.

HERAKLES.

Fly, O unhappy, this my impious plague!

THESEUS.

No plague of vengeance flits to friends
from friends.

HERAKLES.

I praise thee. But I helped thee, — that
is truth.

THESEUS.

And I, advantaged then, now pity thee.

HERAKLES.

-- The pitiable, — my children's murderer!

THESEUS.

I mourn for thy sake, in this altered lot.

HERAKLES.

Hast thou found others in still greater woe?

THESEUS.

Thou, from earth, touchest heaven, one 4
huge distress!

HERAKLES.

Accordingly, I am prepared to die.

THESEUS.

Think'st thou thy threats at all import the
gods?

HERAKLES.

Gods please themselves: to gods I give
their like.

THESEUS.

Shut thy mouth, lest big words bring bigger
woe!

HERAKLES.

I am full fraught with ills — no stowing
more!

THESEUS.

Thou wilt do — what, then? Whither
moody borne?

HERAKLES.

Dying, I go below earth whence I came.

THESEUS.

Thou hast used words of — what man
turns up first!

HERAKLES.

While thou, being outside sorrow, schoolest
me.

THESEUS.

The much-enduring Herakles talks thus? —

HERAKLES.

Not the so much-enduring: measure's past.

THESEUS.

— Mainstay to mortals, and their mighty friend?

HERAKLES.

They nowise profit me: but Heré rules.

THESEUS.

Hellas forbids thou shouldst ineptly die.

HERAKLES.

But hear, then, how I strive by arguments
Against thy teachings! I will ope thee
out

My life — past, present — as unliveable.
First, I was born of this man, who had
slain

His mother's aged sire, and, sullied so,
Married Alkmené, she who gave me birth.
Now, when the basis of a family
Is not laid right, what follows needs must
fall;

And Zeus, whoever Zeus is, formed me foe
To Heré (take not thou offence, old man!
Since father, in Zeus' stead, account I thee),
And, while I was at suck yet, frightful
snakes,

She introduced among my swaddling
clothes, —

That bedfellow of Zeus! — to end me so.
But when I gained the youthful garb of
flesh,

The labours I endured: — what need to
tell?

What lions ever, or three-bodied brutes,
Tuphons or giants, or the four-legg'd
swarms

Of Kentaur-battle, did not I end out?
And that hound, headed all about with
heads

Which cropped up twice, the Hudra,
having slain —

I both went through a myriad other toils
In full drove, and arrived among the dead
To convoy, as Eurústheus bade, to light
Haides' three-headed dog and doorkeeper.
But then I, — wretch, — dared this last
labour — see!

Slew my sons, keystone-coped my house
with ill.

To such a strait I come! nor my dear
Thebes

Dare I inhabit: and, suppose I stay?
Into what fane or festival of friends

Am I to go? My curse scarce courts
accost!

Shall I seek Argos? How, if fled from
home?

But say — I hurry to some other town:
And there they eye me, as notorious now, —
Kept by sharp tongue-taunts under lock ⁴⁶
and key —

"Is not this he, Zeus' son, who murdered
once

Children and wife? Let him go rot else-
where!"

To any man renowned as happy once,
Reverses are a grave thing; but to whom
Evil is old acquaintance, there's no hurt
To speak of, he and misery are twins.

To this degree of woe I think to come:
For earth will utter voice forbidding me
To touch the ground, and sea — to pierce
the wave,

The river-springs — to drink, and I shall ⁵⁰
play

Ixion's part quite out, the chained and
wheeled!

And best of all will be, if so I 'scape
Sight from one man of those Hellenes, —
once

I lived among, felicitous and rich!

Why ought I then to live? What gain
accrues

From good-for-nothing, wicked life I lead?
In fine, let Zeus' brave consort dance and
sing,

Stamp foot, the Olumpian Zeus' own
sandal-trick!

What she has willed, that brings her will to
pass —

The foremost man of Hellas pedestalled, ⁶⁰
Up, over, and down whirling! Who
would pray

To such a goddess? — that, begrudging
Zeus

Because he loved a woman, ruins me —
Lover of Hellas, faultless of the wrong!

THESEUS.

This strife is from no other of the gods
Than Zeus' wife; rightly apprehend, as
well,

Why, to no death — thou meditatest now
I would persuade thee, but to bear thy
woes!

None, none of mortals boasts a fate un-
mixed,

Nor gods — if poets' teaching be not false. ⁷⁰
Have not they joined in wedlock against
law

With one another? not, for sake of rule,
Branded their sires in bondage? Yet
they house,

All the same, in Olumpus, carry heads
High there, notorious sinners though they
be!

What wilt thou say, then, if thou, mortal-
born,

Bearest outrageously fate gods endure?
Leave Thebes, now, pay obedience to the
law

And follow me to Pallas' citadel!
There, when thy hands are purified from
stain,

House will I give thee, and goods shared
alike.

What gifts I hold too from the citizens
For saving twice seven children, when I
slew

The Knosian bull, these also give I thee.
And everywhere about the land are plots
10 Apportioned me: these, named by thine
own name,

Shall be henceforward styled by all men —
thine,

Thy life long; but at death, when Haides-
bound,

All Athens shall uphold the honoured one
With sacrifices, and huge marble heaps:
For that's a fair crown our Hellenes grant
Their people — glory, should they help
the brave!

And I repay thee back this grace for thine
That saved me, now that thou art lorn of
friends —

Since, when the gods give honour, friends
may flit:

20 For, a god's help suffices, if he please.

HERAKLES.

Ah me, these words are foreign to my
woes!

I neither fancy gods love lawless beds,
Nor, that with chains they bind each other's
hands,

Have I judged worthy faith, at any time;
Nor shall I be persuaded — one is born
His fellows' master! since God stands in
need —

If he is really God — of nought at all.
These are the poets' pitiful conceits!
But this it was I pondered, though woe-
whelmed —

30 "Take heed lest thou be taxed with coward-
ice

Somehow in leaving thus the light of day!"
For whoso cannot make a stand against
These same misfortunes, neither could
withstand

A mere man's dart, oppose death, strength
to strength.

Therefore unto thy city I will go
And have the grace of thy ten thousand
gifts.

There! I have tasted of ten thousand
toils

As truly — never waived a single one,
Nor let these runnings drop from out my
eyes:

40 Nor ever thought it would have come to
this —

That I from out my eyes do drop tears.
Well!

At present, as it seems, one bows to fate.
So be it! Old man, thou seest my
exile —

Seest, too, me — my children's murderer!
These give thou to the tomb, and deck the
dead,

Doing them honour with thy tears —
since me

Law does not sanction. Propping on her
breast,

And giving them into their mother's arms,
— Re-institute the sad community

Which I, unhappy, brought to nothing- 50
ness —

Not by my will! And, when earth hides
the dead,

Live in this city! — sad, but, all the same,
Force thy soul to bear woe along with me!
O children, who begat and gave you
birth —

Your father — has destroyed you! nought
you gain

By those fair deeds of mine I laid you up,
As by main-force I laboured glory out
To give you, — that fine gift of father-
hood!

And thee, too, O my poor one, I de-
stroyed,

Not rendering like for like, as when thou 60
kept'st

My marriage-bed inviolate, — those long
Household-seclusions draining to the
dregs

Inside my house! O me, my wife, my
boys —

And — O myself, how, miserably moved,
Am I dysoked now from both boys and
wife!

O bitter those delights of kisses now —
And bitter these my weapons' fellowship!
For I am doubtful whether shall I keep
Or cast away these arrows which will
clang

Ever such words out, as they knock my 70
side —

"Us — thou didst murder wife and
children with!

Us — child-destroyers — still thou keepest
thine!"

Ha, shall I bear them in my arms, then?
What

Say for excuse? Yet, naked of my darts
Wherewith I did my bravest, Hellas
through,

Throwing myself beneath foot to my foes,
Shall I die basely? No! relinquishment
Of these must never be, — companions
once,

We sorrowfully must observe the pact.

In just one thing, co-operate with me. 80

Thy sad friend, Theseus! Go along with
him

To Argos, and in concert get arranged
The price my due for bringing there the
Hound!

O land of Kadmos, Theban people all,
Shear off your locks, lament one wide
lament,

Go to my children's grave and, in one
strain,

Lament the whole of us — my dead and
me —

Since all together are fordone and lost,
Smitten by Heré's single stroke of fate!

THESEUS.

Rise up now from thy dead ones! Tears
enough,
to Poor friend!

HERAKLES.

I cannot: for my limbs are fixed.

THESEUS.

Ay: even these strong men fate over-
throws.

HERAKLES.

Woe!

Here might I grow a stone, nor mind woes
more!

THESEUS

Cease! Give thy hand to friendly help-
mate now!

HERAKLES.

Nay, but I wipe off blood upon thy robes.

THESEUS.

Squeeze out and spare no drop! I take
it all!

HERAKLES.

Of sons bereaved, I have thee like my son.

THESEUS.

Give to my neck thy hand! 'tis I will lead.

HERAKLES.

Yoke-fallows friendly — one heart-broken,
though!

20 O father, such a man we need for friend!

AMPHITRUON.

Certes the land that bred him boasts good
sons.

HERAKLES.

Turn me round, Theseus — to behold my
boys!

THESEUS.

What? will the having such a love-charm
soothe?

HERAKLES.

I want it, and to press my father's breast.

AMPHITRUON.

See here, O son! for, what I love thou
seek'st.

THESEUS.

Strange! Of thy labours no more
memory?

HERAKLES.

All those were less than these, those ills I
bore.

THESEUS.

Who sees thee grow a woman, — will not
praise.

HERAKLES.

I live low to thee? Not so once, I think.

THESEUS.

Too low by far! "Famed Herakles" — 30
where's he?

HERAKLES.

Down amid evils, of what kind wast *thou*?

THESEUS.

As far as courage — least of all mankind!

HERAKLES.

How say'st, then, *I* in evils shrink to
nought?

THESEUS.

Forward!

HERAKLES.

Farewell, old father!

AMPHITRUON.

Thou too, son!

HERAKLES.

Bury the boys as I enjoined!

AMPHITRUON.

Who will be found to bury now, my child? *And me —*

HERAKLES.

Myself.

AMPHITRUON.

When, coming?

HERAKLES.

When thy task is done.

AMPHITRUON.

How?

HERAKLES.

I will have thee carried forth from 40
Thebes
To Athens. But bear in the children,
earth

Is burthened by! Myself, — who with
these shames
Have cast away my house, — a ruined
hulk,
I follow — trailed by Theseus — on my
way;
And whoso rather would have wealth and
strength
Than good friends, reasons foolishly
therein.

CHOROS.

And we depart, with sorrow at heart,
Sobs that increase with tears that start;
The greatest of all our friends of yore
We have lost for evermore!

- 10 When the long silence ended, — "Our
best friend —
Lost, our best friend!" he muttered mus-
ingly.
Then, "Lachares the sculptor" (half
aloud)
"Sinned he or sinned he not? 'Out-
rageous sin!'
Shuddered our elders, 'Pallas should be
clothed:
He carved her naked.' 'But more beauti-
ful!'
Answers this generation: 'Wisdom formed
For love not fear!' And there the statue
stands,
Entraps the eye severer art repels.
Moreover, Pallas wields the thunderbolt
20 Yet has not struck the artist all this while.
Pheidias and Aischulos? Euripides
And Lachares? But youth will have its
way.
The ripe man ought to be as old as young —
As young as old. I too have youth at
need.
Much may be said for stripping wisdom
bare.
"And who's 'our best friend'? You play
kottabos;
Here's the last mode of playing. Take
a sphere
With orifices at due interval,
Through topmost one of which, a throw
adroit
30 Sends wine from cup, clean passage, from
outside
To where, in hollow midst, a manikin
Suspended ever bobs with head erect
Right underneath whatever hole's a-top
When you set orb a-rolling: plumb, he
gets
Ever this benediction of the splash.
An other-fashioned orb presents him
fixed:
Of all the outlets, he fronts only one,

And only when that one, — and rare the
chance, —
Comes uppermost, does he turn upward
too:
He can't turn all sides with the turning 40
orb.
Inside this sphere of life, — all objects,
sense
And soul perceive, — Euripides hangs
fixed,
Gets knowledge through the single aper-
ture
Of High and Right: with visage fronting
these
He waits the wine thence ere he operate,
Work in the world and write a tragedy.
When that hole happens to revolve to
point,
In drops the knowledge, waiting meets re-
ward.
But, duly in rotation, Low and Wrong —
When these enjoy the moment's altitude, 50
His heels are found just where his head
should be!
No knowledge that way! I am move-
able, —
To slightest shift of orb make prompt re-
sponse,
Face Low and Wrong and Weak and all
the rest,
And still drink knowledge, wine-drenched
every turn, —
Equally favoured by their opposites.
Little and Bad exist, are natural:
Then let me know them, and be twice as
great
As he who only knows one phase of life!
So doubly shall I prove 'best friend of 60
man,'
If I report the whole truth — Vice, per-
ceived
While he shut eyes to all but Virtue there.
Man's made of both: and both must be of
use
To somebody: if not to him, to me.
While, as to your imaginary Third
Who, stationed (by mechanics past my
guess)
So as to take in every side at once,
And not successively, — may reconcile
The High and Low in tragi-comic verse, —
He shall be hailed superior to us both 70
When born — in the Tin-islands! Mean-
time, here
In bright Athenai, I contest the claim,
Call myself Iostephanos 'best friend,'
Who took my own course, worked as I
descried
Ordainment, stuck to my first faculty.
"For listen! There's no failure breaks
the heart,
Whate'er be man's endeavour in this
world,

Like the rash poet's when he — nowise
fails

By poetising badly, — Zeus or makes
Or mars a man, so — at it, merrily!
But when, — made man, — much like
myself, — equipt

For such and such achievement, — rash
he turns

Out of the straight path, bent on snatch of
feat

From — who's the appointed fellow born
thereto, —

Crows take him! — in your Kassiterides?
Half-doing his work, leaving mine un-
touched,

10 That were the failure. Here I stand,
heart-whole,
No Thamuris!

“Well thought of, Thamuris
Has zeal, pray, for ‘best friend’ Euripi-
des

Allowed you to observe the honour done
His elder rival, in our Poikilé?

You don't know? Once and only once,
trod stage,

Sang and touched lyre in person, in his
youth,

Our Sophokles, — youth, beauty, dedicate
To Thamuris who named the tragedy.

The voice of him was weak; face, limbs
and lyre,

20 These were worth saving: Thamuris
stands yet

Perfect as painting helps in such a case.
At least you know the story, for ‘best
friend’

Enriched his ‘Rhesos’ from the Blind
Bard's store;

So haste and see the work, and lay to
heart

What it was struck me when I eyed the
piece!

Here stands a poet punished for rash
strife

With Powers above his power, who see
with sight

Beyond his vision, sing accordingly
A song, which he must needs dare emu-
late.

30 Poet, remain the man nor ape the Muse!

“But — lend me the psalterion! Nay,
for once —

Once let my hand fall where the other's
lay!

I see it, just as I were Sophokles,
That sunrise and combustion of the east!”

And then he sang — are these unlike the
words?

Thamuris marching, — lyre and song of
Thrace —

(Perpend the first, the worst of woes that
were

Allotted lyre and song, ye poet-race!)

Thamuris from Oichalia, feasted there
By kingly Eurutos of late, now bound 40
For Dorion at the uprise broad and bare

Of Mount Pangaios (ore with earth en-
wound

Glittered beneath his footstep) — march-
ing gay

And glad, Thessalia through, came, robed
and crowned,

From triumph on to triumph, mid a ray
Of early morn, — came, saw and knew the
spot

Assigned him for his worst of woes, that
day.

Balura — happier while its name was
not —

Met him, but nowise menaced; slipt aside,
Obsequious river to pursue its lot 50

Of solacing the valley — say, some wide
Thick busy human cluster, house and
home,

Embanked for peace, or thrift that thanks
the tide.

Thamuris, marching, laughed “Each
flake of foam”

(As sparkingly the ripple raced him by)
“Mocks slower clouds adrift in the blue
dome!”

For Autumn was the season; red the sky
Held morn's conclusive signet of the sun

To break the mists up, bid them blaze and
die.

Morn had the mastery as, one by one 60
All pomps produced themselves along the
tract

From earth's far ending to near heaven
begun.

Was there a ravaged tree? it laughed com-
pact

With gold, a leaf-ball crisp, high-bran-
dished now,

Tempting to onset frost which late at-
tacked.

Was there a wizened shrub, a starveling
bough,

A fleecy thistle filched from by the wind,
A weed, Pan's trampling hoof would dis-
allow?

Each, with a glory and a rapture twined :
About it, joined the rush of air and light 70

And force: the world was of one joyous mind.

Say not the birds flew! they forebore their right —

Swam, revelling onward in the roll of things.

Say not the beasts' mirth bounded! that was flight —

How could the creatures leap, no lift of wings?

Such earth's community of purpose, such The ease of earth's fulfilled imaginings, —

So did the near and far appear to touch I' the moment's transport, — that an interchange

ro Of function, far with near, seemed scarce too much;

And had the rooted plant aspired to range With the snake's licence, while the insect yearned

To grow fixed as the flower, it were not strange —

No more than if the fluttery tree-top turned

To actual music, sang itself aloft; Or if the wind, impassioned chantress, earned

The right to soar embodied in some soft Fine form all fit for cloud-companionship, And, blissful, once touch beauty chased so oft.

20 Thamuris, marching, let no fancy slip Born of the fiery transport; lyre and song Were his, to smite with hand and launch from lip —

Peerless recorded, since the list grew long Of poets (saith Homeros) free to stand Pedestalled mid the Muses' temple-throng,

A statued service, laurelled, lyre in hand, (Ay, for we see them) — Thamuris of Thrace

Predominating foremost of the band.

Therefore the morn-ray that enriched his face,

30 If it gave lambent chill, took flame again From flush of pride; he saw, he knew the place.

What wind arrived with all the rhythms from plain, Hill, dale, and that rough wildwood interspersed?

Compounding these to one consummate strain,

It reached him, music; but his own outburst

Of victory concluded the account, And that grew song which was mere music erst.

"Be my Parnassos, thou Pangaian mount!

And turn thee, river, nameless hitherto! Famed shalt thou vie with famed Pieria's 40 fount!

"Here I await the end of this ado: Which wins — Earth's poet or the Heavenly Muse." . . .

But song broke up in laughter. "Tell the rest

Who may! I have not spurned the common life,

Nor vaunted mine a lyre to match the Muse

Who sings for gods, not men! Accordingly,

I shall not decorate her vestibule — Mute marble, blind the eyes and quenched the brain,

Loose in the hand a bright, a broken lyre! — Not Thamuris but Aristophanes! 50

"There! I have sung content back to myself,

And started subject for a play beside.

My next performance shall content you both.

Did 'Prelude-Battle' maul 'best friend' too much?

Then 'Main-Fight' be my next song, fairness' self!

Its subject — Contest for the Tragic Crown.

Ay, you shall hear none else but Aischulos Lay down the law of Tragedy, and prove 'Best friend' a stray-away, — no praise denied

His manifold deservings, never fear — 60 Nor word more of the old fun! Death defends.

Sound admonition has its due effect.

Oh, you have uttered weighty words, believe!

Such as shall bear abundant fruit, next year, In judgment, regular, legitimate.

Let Bacchos' self preside in person! Ay — For there's a buzz about those 'Bacchanals'

Rumour attributes to your great and dead For final effort: just the prodigy

Great dead men leave, to lay survivors 70 low!

— Until we make acquaintance with our fate

And find, fate's worst done, we, the same, survive

Perchance to honour more the patron-god,
Fittier inaugurate a festal year.

Now that the cloud has broken, sky laughs
blue,

Earth blossoms youthfully. Athenai
breathes.

After a twenty-six years' wintry blank
Struck from her life, — war-madness, one
long swoon,

She wakes up: Arginousai bids good
cheer.

We have disposed of Kallikratidas;
Once more will Sparté sue for terms, —
who knows?

10 Cede Dekeleia, as the rumour runs:
Terms which Athenai, of right mind again,
Accepts — she can no other. Peace de-
clared,

Have my long labours borne their fruit or
no?

Grinned coarse buffoonery so oft in vain?
Enough — it simply saved you. Saved
ones, praise

Theoria's beauty and Opora's breadth!
Nor, when Peace realises promised bliss,

Forget the Bald Bard, Envy! but go burst
As the cup goes round and the cates abound,

20 *Collops of hare with roast spinks¹ rare!*
Confess my pipings, dancings, posings
served

A purpose: guttlings, guzzlings, had their
use!

Say whether light Muse, Rosy-finger-tips,
Or 'best friend's' heavy-band, Mel-
pomené,

Touched lyre to purpose, played Am-
phion's part,

And built Athenai to the skies once more!
Farewell, brave couple! Next year, wel-
come me!"

No doubt, in what he said that night,
sincere!

One story he referred to, false or fact,

30 Was not without adaptability.

They do say — Lais the Corinthian once

Chancing to see Euripides (who paced

Composing in a garden, tablet book

In left hand, with appended stulos
prompt)

"Answer me," she began, "O Poet, —
this!

What didst intend by writing in thy play
Go hang, thou filthy doer?" Struck on

heap,

Euripides, at the audacious speech —

"Well now," quoth he, "thyself art just
the one

40 I should imagine fit for deeds of filth!"

She laughingly retorted his own line

"What's filth, — unless who does it, thinks
it so?"

¹ Chaffinches.

So might he doubtless think. "Fare- 40
well," said we.

And he was gone, lost in the morning-grey,
Rose-streaked and gold to eastward.

Did we dream?

Could the poor twelve-hours hold this
argument

We render durable from fugitive,
As duly at each sunset's droop of sail,

Delay of oar, submission to sea-might,
I still remember, you as duly dint 50

Remembrance, with the punctual rapid
style,

Into — what calm cold page!

Thus soul escapes

From eloquence made captive: thus mere
words

— Ah, would the lifeless body stay! But
no:

Change upon change till, — who may
recognize

What did soul service, in the dusty heap?

What energy of Aristophanes

Inflames the wreck Balaustion saves to
show?

Ashes be evidence how fire — with
smoke —

All night went lamping on! But morn 60
must rise.

The poet — I shall say — burned up and,
blank

Smouldered this ash, now white and cold
enough.

Nay, Euthukles! for best, though mine
it be,

Comes yet. Write on, write ever, wrong
no word!

Add, first, — he gone, if jollity went too,
Some of the graver mood, which mixed
and marred,

Departed likewise. Sight of narrow scope
Has this meek consolation: neither ill

We dread, nor joys we dare anticipate,
Perform to promise. Each soul sows a 70

seed —

Euripides and Aristophanes;

Seed bears crop, scarce within our little
lives;

But germinates, — perhaps enough to
judge, —

Next year?

Whereas, next year brought harvest
time!

For, next year came, and went not, but is
now,

Still now, while you and I are bound for
Rhodes

That's all but reached — and harvest has
it brought,

Dire as the homicidal dragon-crop.
 Sophokles had dismissal ere it dawned,
 Happy as ever; though men mournfully
 Plausive, — when only soul could triumph
 now,
 And Iophon produced his father's play,
 Crowned the consummate song where
 Oidipous
 Dared the descent mid earthquake-
 thundering,
 And hardly Theseus' hands availed to
 guard
 Eyes from the horror, as their grove dis-
 gorged
 10 Its dread ones, while each daughter sank
 to ground.

Then Aristophanes, on heel of that,
 Triumphant also, followed with his
 "Frogs."
 Produced at next Lenaia, — three months
 since, —
 The promised Main-Fight, loyal, licence-
 free!
 As if the poet, primed with Thasian juice,
 (Himself swore — wine that conquers
 every kind
 For long abiding in the head) could fix
 Thenceforward any object in its truth,
 Through eyeballs bathed by mere Cas-
 talian dew,
 20 Nor miss the borrowed medium, — vinous
 drop
 That colours all to the right crimson pitch
 When mirth grows mockery, censure
 takes the tinge
 Of malice!

All was Aristophanes:

There blazed the glory, there shot black the
 shame.
 Ay, Bacchos did stand forth, the Tragic
 God
 In person! and when duly dragged
 through mire, —
 Having lied, filched, played fool, proved
 coward, flung
 The boys their dose of fit indecency,
 And finally got trounced to heart's con-
 tent,
 30 At his own feast, in his own theatre
 (— Oh never fear! 'Twas consecrated
 sport,
 Exact tradition, warranted no whit
 Offensive to instructed taste, — indeed,
 Essential to Athenai's liberty,
 Could the poor stranger understand!) why,
 then —
 He was pronounced the rarely-qualified
 To rate the work, adjust the claims to
 worth,
 Of Aischulos (of whom, in other mood,
 This same appreciative poet pleased
 40 To say "He's all one stiff and gluey piece

Of back of swine's neck!") — and of
 Chatterbox
 Who, "twisting words like wool," usurped
 his seat
 In Plouton's realm: "the arch-roogue, liar,
 scamp
 That lives by snatching-up of altar-orts,"
 — Who failed to recognise Euripides?

Then came a contest for supremacy —
 Crammed full of genius, wit and fun and
 freak.
 No spice of undue spite to spoil the dish
 Of all sorts, — for the Mystics matched
 the Frogs
 In poetry, no Siren sang so sweet! — 50
 Till, pressed into the service (how dispense
 With Phaps-Elaphion and free foot-dis-
 play?)
 The Muse of dead Euripides danced frank,
 Rattled her bits of tile, made all too plain
 How baby-work like "Herakles" had
 birth!
 Last, Bacchos, — candidly disclaiming
 brains
 Able to follow finer argument, —
 Confessed himself much moved by three
 main facts:
 First, — if you stick a "Lost his flask of
 oil"
 At pause of period, you perplex the sense — 60
 Were it the Elegy for Marathon!
 Next, if you weigh two verses, "car" —
 the word,
 Will outweigh "club" — the word, in each
 packed line!
 And — last, worst fact of all! — in rivalry
 The younger poet dared to improvise
 Laudation less distinct of — Triphales?
 (Nay, that served when ourself abused the
 youth!)
 Pheidippides? (nor that's appropriate
 now!)
 Then, — Alkibiades, our city's hope,
 Since times change and we Comics should 70
 change too!
 These three main facts, well weighed, drew
 judgment down,
 Conclusively assigned the wretch his
 fate —
 "Fate due" admonished the sage Mystic
 choir,
 "To sitting, prate-apace, with Sokrates,
 Neglecting music and each tragic aid!"
 — All wound-up by a wish "We soon may
 cease
 From certain griefs, and warfare, worst of
 them!"
 — Since, deaf to Comedy's persistent
 voice,
 War still raged, still was like to rage. In
 vain
 Had Sparté cried once more "But grant us 80
 Peace

We give you Dekeleia back!" Too shrewd
Was Kleophon to let escape, forsooth,
The enemy — at final gasp, besides!

So, Aristophanes obtained the prize,
And so Athenai felt she had a friend
Far better than her "best friend," lost
last year;

And so, such fame had "Frogs" that,
when came round

This present year, those Frogs croaked
gay again

At the great Feast, Elaphebolion-month,¹
10 Only — there happened Aigispotamoi!

And, in the midst of the frog-merriment,
Plump o' the sudden, pounces stern King
Stork

On the light-hearted people of the marsh!
Spartan Lusandros swooped precipitate,
Ended Athenai, rowed her sacred bay
With oars which brought a hundred
triremes back
Captivē!

And first word of the conqueror
Was "Down with those Long Walls,
Peiraios' pride!

Destroy, yourselves, your bulwarks! Peace
needs none!"

20 And "We obey" they shuddered in their
dream.

But, at next quick imposure of decree —
"No longer democratic government!
Henceforth such oligarchy as ourselves
Please to appoint you!" — then the horror
stung

Dreamers awake; they started up a-stare
At the half-helot captain and his crew
— Spartans, "men used to let their hair
grow long,

To fast, be dirty, and just — Sokratize" —
Whose word was "Trample on Themis-
tokles!"

30 So, as the way is with much misery,
The heads swam, hands refused their office,
hearts

Sunk as they stood in stupor. "Wreck
the Walls?

Ruin Peiraios? — with our Pallas armed
For interference? — Herakles apprised,
And Theseus hasting? Lay the Long
Walls low?"

Three days they stood, stared, — stonier
than their walls.

Whereupon, sleep who might, Lusandros
woke:

Saw the prostration of his enemy,

¹ Stag-hunting time.

Utter and absolute beyond belief,
Past hope of hatred even. I surmise
He also probably saw fade in fume
Certain fears, bred of Bakis²-prophecy,
Nor apprehended any more that gods
And heroes, — fire, must glow forth, guard
the ground

Where prone, by sober day-dawn, corpse-
like lay

Powerless Athenai, late predominant
Lady of Hellas, — Spartē's slave-prize
now!

Where should a menace lurk in those slack
limbs?

What was to move his circumspection?
Why

Demolish just Peiraios?

"Stay!" bade he:

"Already promise-breakers? True to
type,
Athenians! past and present and to
come —

The fickle and the false! No stone dis-
lodged,
No implement applied, yet three days'
grace

Expire! Forbearance is no longer-lived.
By breaking promise, terms of peace you
break —

Too gently framed for falsehood, ficklen-
ness!

All must be reconsidered — yours the
fault!"

Wherewith, he called a council of allies.
Pent-up resentment used its privilege, — 60
Outburst at ending: this the summed
result.

"Because we would avenge no transient
wrong

But an eternity of insolence,
Aggression, — folly, no disasters mend,
Pride, no reverses teach humility, —

Because too plainly were all punishment,
Such as comports with less obdurate
crime,

Evadable by falsehood, fickleness,
Experience proves the true Athenian
type, —

Therefore, 'tis need we dig deep down 70
into

The root of evil; lop nor bole nor branch.
Look up, look round and see, on every
side,

What nurtured the rank tree to noisome
fruit!

We who live hutted (so they laugh) not
housed,

Build barns for temples, prize mud-monu-
ments,

² Bakis was a foolish soothsayer, an Athenian
"red-faced Nixon."

Nor show the sneering stranger aught
but — men, —

Spartans take insult of Athenians just
Because they boast Akropolis to mount,
And Propylaia to make entry by,
Through a mad maze of marble arrogance
Such as you see — such as let none see
more!

Abolish the detested luxury!
Leave not one stone upon another, raze
Athenai to the rock! Let hill and plain
10 Become a waste, a grassy pasture-ground
Where sheep may wander, grazing goats
depend
From shapeless crags once columns! so
at last
Shall peace inhabit there, and peace
enough."

Whereon, a shout approved "Such peace
bestow!"

Then did a Man of Phokis rise — O
heart!

Rise — when no bolt of Zeus disparted
sky,
No omen-bird from Pallas scared the
crew,

Rise — when mere human argument
could stem

No foam-fringe of the passion surging
fierce,

20 Baffle no wrath-wave that o'er barrier
broke —

Who was the Man of Phokis rose and
flung

A flower i' the way of that fierce foot's
advance,

Which — stop for? — nay, had stamped
down sword's assault!

Could it be *He* stayed Sparté with the
snatch

"Daughter of Agamemnon, late my liege,
Elektra, palaced once, a visitant
To thy poor rustic dwelling, now I come?"

Ay, facing fury of revenge, and lust

Of hate, and malice moaning to appease
30 Hunger on prey presumptuous, prostrate
now —

Full in the hideous faces — last resource,
You flung that choric flower, my Euthukles!

And see, as through some pinhole, should
the wind

Wedgingly pierce but once, in with a rush
Hurries the whole wild weather, rends to
rags

The weak sail stretched against the outside
storm —

So did the power of that triumphant play
Pour in, and oversweep the assembled foe!
Triumphant play, wherein our poet first

Dared bring the grandeur of the Tragic

Two

Down to the level of our common life,
Close to the beating of our common heart.
Elektra? 'Twas Athenai, Sparté's ice
Thawed to, while that sad portraiture
appealed —

Agamemnonian lady, lost by fault
Of her own kindred, cast from house and
home,

Despoiled of all the brave inheritance,
Dowered humbly as befits a herdsman's
mate,

Partaker of his cottage, clothed in rags,
Patient performer of the poorest chares,
Yet mindful, all the while, of glory past
When she walked darling of Mekenai,
dear

Beyond Orestes to the King of Men!

So, because Greeks are Greeks, though
Sparté's brood,

And hearts are hearts, though in Lu-
sandros' breast,

And poetry is power, and Euthukles
Had faith therein to, full-face, fling the
same —

Sudden, the ice-thaw! The assembled
foe,

Heaving and swaying with strange friend-
liness,

Cried "Reverence Elektra!" — cried "Ab-
stain

Like that chaste Herdsman, nor dare
violate

The sanctity of such reverse! Let stand
Athenai!"

Mindful of that story's close,
Perchance, and how, — when he, the
Herdsman chaste,

Needs apprehend no break of tranquil
sleep, —

All in due time, a stranger, dark, dis-
guised,

Knocks at the door: with searching
glance, notes keen,

Knows quick, through mean attire and
disrespect,

The ravaged princess! Ay, right on, the
clutch

Of guiding retribution has in charge
The author of the outrage! While one

hand,
Elektra's, pulls the door behind, made fast

On fate, — the other strains, prepared to
push

The victim-queen, should she make
frightened pause

Before that serpentine blood which steals
Out of the darkness where, a pace beyond,

Above the slain Aigisthos, bides his blow
Dreadful Orestes!

Klutaïmnestra, wise
This time, forbore; Elektra held her own;
Saved was Athenai through Euripides,
Through Euthukles, through — more than
ever — me,
Balaustion, me, who, Wild-pomegranate-
flower,
Felt my fruit triumph, and fade proudly
so!

But next day, as ungracious minds are
wont,
The Spartan, late surprised into a grace,
Grew sudden sober at the enormity,
And grudged, by daybreak, midnight's
easy gift;
Splenetically must repay its cost
By due increase of rigour, doglike snatch
At aught still left dog to concede like
man.
Rough sea, at flow of tide, may lip, per-
chance,
Smoothly the land-line reached as for
repose —
Lie indolent in all unquestioned sway;
But ebbing, when needs must, all thwart
and loth,
Sea claws at sand relinquished strugglingly.
So, harsh Lusandros — pinioned to in-
flict
The lesser penalty alone — spoke harsh,
As minded to embitter scathe by scorn.

"Athenai's self be saved then, thank the
Lyre!
If Tragedy withdraws her presence —
quick,
If Comedy replace her, — what more
just?
Let Comedy do service, frisk away,
Dance off stage these indomitable stones,
Long Walls, Peiraian bulwarks! Hew
and heave,
Pick at, pound into dust each dear de-
fence!
Not to the Kommos¹ — *eleleleu*
With breast bethumped, as Tragic lyre
prefers,
But Comedy shall sound the flute, and
crow
At kordax-end — the hearty slapping-
dance!
Collect those flute-girls — trash who
flattered ear
With whistlings and fed eye with caper-
cuts
While we Lakonians supped black broth
or crunched
Sea-urchin, conchs and all, unpricked —
coarse brutes!
Command they lead off step, time steady
stroke

¹ Stage-weeping.

To spade and pickaxe, till demolished lie
Athenai's pride in power!"

Done that day —
That sixteenth famed day of Munuchion- 40
month!
The day when Hellas fought at Salamis,
The very day Euripides was born,
Those flute-girls — Phaps-Elaphion at
their head —
Did blow their best, did dance their
worst, the while
Sparté pulled down the walls, wrecked
wide the works,
Laid low each merest molehill of defence,
And so the Power, Athenai, passed away!
We would not see its passing. Ere I
knew
The issue of their counsels, — crouching
low
And shrouded by my peplos, — I con- 50
ceived,
Despite the shut eyes, the stopped ears,
— by count
Only of heart-beats, telling the slow
time, —
Athenai's doom was signed and signified
in that assembly, — ay, but knew there
watched
One who would dare and do, nor bate at
all
The stranger's licensed duty, — speak
the word
Allowed the Man from Phokis! Nought
remained
But urge departure, flee the sights and
sounds,
Hideous exultings, wailings worth con-
tempt,
And press to other earth, new heaven, by 60
sea
That somehow ever prompts to 'scape
despair.

Help rose to heart's wish; at the harbour-
side,
The old grey mariner did reverence
To who had saved his ship, still weather-
tight
As when with prow gay-garlanded she
praised
The hospitable port and pushed to sea.
"Convoy Balaustion back to Rhodes, for
sake
Of her and her Euripides!" laughed he.
Rhodes, — shall it not be there, my
Euthukles,
Till this brief trouble of a life-time end, 70
That solitude — two make so populous! —
For food finds memories of the past
suffice,

May be, anticipations, — hope so swells, —
Of some great future we, familiar once
With who so taught, should hail and enter-
tain?

He lies now in the little valley, laughed
And moaned about by those mysterious
streams,

Boiling and freezing, like the love and
hate

Which helped or harmed him through his
earthly course.

They mix in Arethousa by his grave.

The warm spring, traveller, dip thine arms
into,

10 Brighten thy brow with! Life detests
black cold.

I sent the tablets, the psalterion, so

Rewarded Sicily; the tyrant there

Bestowed them worthily in Phoibos'
shrine.

A gold-graved writing tells — "I also
loved

The poet, Free Athenai cheaply prized —
King Dionusios, — Archelaos-like!"

And see if young Philemon, — sure one
day

To do good service and be loved him-
self, —

If he too have not made a votive verse!

"Grant, in good sooth, our great dead, all 26
the same,

Retain their sense, as certain wise men
say,

I'd hang myself — to see Euripides!"

Hands off, Philemon! nowise hang thy-
self,

But pen the prime plays, labour the right
life,

And die at good old age as grand men
use, —

Keeping thee, with that great thought,
warm the while, —

That he does live, Philemon! Ay, most
sure!

"He lives!" hark, — waves say, winds
sing out the same,

And yonder dares the citted ridge of
Rhodes

Its headlong plunge from sky to sea, dis- 30
parts

North bay from south, — each guarded
calm, that guest

May enter gladly, blow what wind there
will, —

Boiled round with breakers, to no other
cry!

All in one chorus, — what the master-word
They take up? — hark! "There are no

gods, no gods!

Glory to God — who saves Euripides!"

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

1868-9.

["The Ring and the Book" appeared at the end of 1868, after a four years' silence since the publication of "Dramatis Personæ." It was issued in four volumes, which were published singly, the first in November 1868, the others between that date and February 1869. The composition of it had occupied the poet for more than three years since the "memorable day" in June 1862, when he picked up, at a stall in the Piazza San Lorenzo in Florence, the "square old yellow book" with the "crumpled vellum covers," containing the record of the murder, by Count Guido Franceschini, of Pompilia his wife and her reputed parents, Pietro and Violante Comparini, in January 1698. The story of the genesis of the poem is told in the first book, which also gives an outline of the whole work. Putting aside the first and last books, which serve as prologue and epilogue, it consists of ten dramatic monologues, in each of which the story of the murder, and of the events and motives which led up to it, is told from a different point of view. Books II. and III. reproduce the gossip of Rome, first on the side favourable to Guido, and next on that hostile to him — in both cases incomplete and inaccurate, but serving to introduce the reader to the general facts of the case. Book IV. gives the conversation of aristocratic society, indifferent, cynical, excusing and condemning both parties. The next three books rise to a higher level, alike of poetry and dramatic interest. The principals are brought upon the stage. In Book V. Count Guido makes his defence before his judges; in Book VI. Giuseppe Caponsacchi, the priest whom Guido charges with being Pompilia's lover, shrivels the accuser's sophistries with his indignant eloquence; in Book VII. Pompilia, dying in the hospital, tells her story in all simplicity and forgivingness. Books VIII. and IX. are devoted to the speeches of counsel on either side, whose sole object is to display their own ingenuity, without much regard to what their clients may have said; and, being full of law-Latin and classical allusions, may be scarcely intelligible to some readers, and can be omitted without much loss. Book X., on the other hand, is the fine soliloquy of the Pope, to whom, in the last resort, Guido makes appeal; while Book XI. shows Guido in his prison, the night before his execution, defiantly haranguing the two ecclesiastics who have been sent to administer to him the consolations of religion.

Throughout the poem Browning adheres closely to the facts as narrated in the book which first suggested the theme, and in a contemporary pamphlet, which he obtained shortly afterwards in London, giving a consecutive narrative of the murder and the execution. The meaning of the title is explained in the first lines of the poem.]

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

I. — THE RING AND THE BOOK.

Do you see this Ring?

'Tis Rome work, made to match
(By Castellani's imitative craft)
Etrurian circlets found, some happy morn,
After a dropping April; found alive
Spark-like 'mid unearthed slope-side fig-
tree-roots

That roof old tombs at Chiusi: soft, you
see,

Yet crisp as jewel-cutting. There's one
trick,

(Craftsmen instruct me) one approved
device

And but one, fits such slivers of pure gold
As this was, — such mere oozings from the
mine,

Virgin as oval tawny pendent tear
At beehive-edge when ripened combs o'er-
flow, —

To bear the file's tooth and the hammer's
tap:

Since hammer needs must widen out the
round,

And file emboss it fine with lily-flowers,
Ere the stuff grow a ring-thing right to
wear.

That trick is, the artificer melts up wax
With honey, so to speak; he mingles gold
With gold's alloy, and, duly tempering
both,

Effects a manageable mass, then works: 23
But his work ended, once the thing a ring,
Oh, there's reprimistination!¹ Just a spirit

¹ Reprimistination: restoration to its earlier
nature.

O' the proper fiery acid o'er its face,
And forth the alloy unfastened flies in
fume;

While, self-sufficient now, the shape re-
mains,

The rondure brave, the liliated loveliness,
Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore:

Prime nature with an added artistry —
No carat lost, and you have gained a ring.

What of it? 'Tis a figure, a symbol, say;
A thing's sign: now for the thing signified.

10 Do you see this square old yellow Book, I
toss

I' the air, and catch again, and twirl about
By the crumpled vellum covers, — pure
crude fact

Secreted from man's life when hearts beat
hard,

And brains, high-blooded, ticked two cen-
turies since?

Examine it yourselves! I found this book,
Gave a *lira* for it, eightpence English just,

(Mark the predestination!) when a Hand,
Always above my shoulder, pushed me
once,

One day still fierce 'mid many a day struck
calm,

20 Across a Square in Florence, crammed with
booths,

Buzzing and blaze, noontide and market-
time,

Toward Baccio's marble,¹ — ay, the base-
ment-ledge

O' the pedestal where sits and menaces
John of the Black Bands with the upright

spear,
'Twixt palace and church, — Riccardi
where they lived,

His race, and San Lorenzo where they lie.
This book, — precisely on that palace-step

Which, meant for lounging knaves o' the
Medici,

Now serves re-venders to display their
ware, —

30 'Mongst odds and ends of ravage, picture-
frames

White through the worn gilt, mirror-
sconces chipped,

Bronze angel-heads once knobs attached to
chests,

(Handled when ancient dames chose forth
brocade)

Modern chalk drawings, studies from the
nude,

Samples of stone, jet, breccia, porphyry
Polished and rough, sundry amazing busts

In baked earth, (broken, Providence be
praised!)

¹ Baccio's marble: the statue of Giovanni
delle Bande Nere (father of Cosimo de' Medici),
by Baccio Bandinelli, in the Piazza San Lorenzo,

between the Palazzo Riccardi (the palace of the
Medici) and the church of San Lorenzo.

A wreck of tapestry, proudly-purposed web
When reds and blues were indeed red and
blue,

Now offered as a mat to save bare feet 40
(Since carpets constitute a cruel cost)

Treading the chill scagliola² bedward:
then

A pile of brown-etched prints, two crazie³
each,

Stopped by a conch a-top from fluttering
forth

— Sowing the Square with works of one
and the same

Master, the imaginative Siene⁴
Great in the scenic backgrounds — (name
and fame

None of you know, nor does he fare the
worse:)

From these . . . Oh, with a Lionard going
cheap

If it should prove, as promised, that so
Joconde⁵

Whereof a copy contents the Louvre! —
these

I picked this book from. Five compeers in
flank

Stood left and right of it as tempting
more —

A dogs-eared Spicilegium, the fond tale
O' the Frail One of the Flower,⁶ by young

Dumas,
Vulgarised Horace for the use of schools,

The Life, Death, Miracles of Saint Some-
body,

Saint Somebody Else, his Miracles, Death
and Life, —

With this, one glance at the lettered back of
which,

And "Stall!" cried I: a *lira* made it mine. 60

Here it is, this I toss and take again;
Small-quarto size, part print part manu-
script:

A book in shape but, really, pure crude
fact

Secreted from man's life when hearts beat
hard,

And brains, high-blooded, ticked two
centuries since.

Give it me back! The thing's restorative
I' the touch and sight.

That memorable day,
(June was the month, Lorenzo named the
Square)

I leaned a little and overlooked my prize

² Scagliola: marble or stone flooring.

³ Two crazie: about 1½d.

⁴ The imaginative Siene^{se}: Ademollo (see
p. 654, l. 37).

⁵ Joconde: the portrait of Mona Lisa Gio-
conda, by Leonardo da Vinci, in the Louvre.

⁶ The Frail One of the Flower: La Dame aux
Camélias.

By the low railing round the fountain-source
 Close to the statue, where a step descends:
 While clinked the cans of copper, as stooped
 and rose
 Thick-ankled girls who brimmed them,
 and made place
 For marketmen glad to pitch basket down,
 Dip a broad melon-leaf that holds the wet,
 And whisk their faded fresh. And on I
 read
 Presently, though my path grew perilous
 Between the outspread straw-work, piles of
 plait
 Soon to be flapping, each o'er two black
 eyes
 And swathe of Tuscan hair, on festas fine:
 Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs, shovels
 in sheaves,
 Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe - drawers
 agape,
 Rows of tall slim brass lamps with dan-
 gling gear, —
 And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in
 the sun:
 None of them took my eye from off my
 prize.
 Still read I on, from written title-page
 To written index, on, through street and
 street,
 At the Strozzi, at the Pillar, at the Bridge;
 Till, by the time I stood at home again
 In Casa Guidi by Felice Church,
 Under the doorway where the black begins
 With the first stone-slab of the staircase
 cold,
 I had mastered the contents, knew the
 whole truth
 Gathered together, bound up in this book,
 Print three-fifths, written supplement the
 rest.
 "*Romana Homicidiorum*" — nay,
 Better translate — "A Roman murder-
 case:
 "Position of the entire criminal cause
 "Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
 "With certain Four the cutthroats in his
 pay,
 "Tried, all five, and found guilty and put
 to death
 "By heading or hanging as befitted ranks,
 "At Rome on February Twenty Two,
 "Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety Eight:
 "Wherein it is disputed if, and when,
 "Husbands may kill adulterous wives, yet
 'scape
 "The customary forfeit."

Word for word,

So ran the title-page: murder, or else
 Legitimate punishment of the other crime,
 Accounted murder by mistake, — just that
 And no more, in a Latin cramp enough
 When the law had her eloquence to launch,

But interfilleted with Italian streaks
 When testimony stooped to mother-
 tongue, —
 That, was this old square y^ellow book
 about.

Now, as the ingot, ere the ring was forged,
 Lay gold, (beseech you, h^od that figure
 fast!)

So, in this book lay absolutely truth,
 Fanciless fact, the documents indeed, 50
 Primary lawyer-pleadings for, against,
 The aforesaid Five; real summed-up cir-
 cumstance

Adduced in proof of these on either side,
 Put forth and printed, as the practice was,
 At Rome, in the Apostolic Chamber's type,
 And so submitted to the eye o' the Court
 Presided over by His Reverence
 Rome's Governor and Criminal Judge, —
 the trial

Itself, to all intents, being then as now
 Here in the book and nowise out of it; 60
 Seeing, there properly was no judgment-
 bar,

No bringing of accuser and accused,
 And whoso judged both parties, face to
 face

Before some court, as we conceive of courts.
 There was a Hall of Justice; that came
 last:

For Justice had a chamber by the hall
 Where she took evidence first, summed up
 the same,

Then sent accuser and accused alike,
 In person of the advocate of each,
 To weigh its worth, thereby arrange, array 70
 The battle. 'Twas the so-styled Fisc¹
 began,

Pleaded (and since he only spoke in print
 The printed voice of him lives now as
 then)

The public Prosecutor — "Murder's
 proved;

"With five . . . what we call qualities of
 bad,

"Worst, worst, and yet worse still, and still
 worse yet;

"Crest over crest crowning the cockatrice,
 "That beggar hell's regalia to enrich

"Count Guido Franceschini: punish
 him!"

Thus was the paper put before the court 80
 In the next stage, (no noisy work at all,)
 To study at ease. In due time like reply
 Came from the so-styled Patron of the
 Poor,

Official mouthpiece of the five accused
 Too poor to fee a better, — Guido's luck
 Or else his fellows', — which, I hardly
 know, —

¹ Fisc: i.e., Counsel for the Treasury, or
 Public Prosecutor.

An outbreak as of wonder at the world,
A fury-fit of outraged innocence,
A passion of betrayed simplicity:

"Punish Count Guido? For what crime,
what hint

"O' the colour of a crime, inform us first!

"Reward him rather! Recognise, we say,

"In the deed done, a righteous judgment
dealt!

"All conscience and all courage, —
there's our Count

"Charactered in a word; and, what's more
strange,

to "He had companionship in privilege,

"Found four courageous conscientious
friends:

"Absolve, applaud all five, as props of law,
"Sustainers of society! — perchance

"A trifle over-hasty with the hand

"To hold her tottering ark, had tumbled
else;

"But that's a splendid fault whereat we
wink,

"Wishing your cold correctness sparkled
so!"

Thus paper second followed paper first,
Thus did the two join issue — nay, the

20 four,
Each pleader having an adjunct. "True,

ne killed
"— So to speak — in a certain sort — his

wife,
"But laudably, since thus it happened!"

quoth one:

Whereat, more witness and the case post-
poned.

"Thus it happened not, since thus he did the
deed,

"And proved himself thereby portentousest

"Of cutthroats and a prodigy of crime,

"As the woman that he slaughtered was a
saint,

"Martyr and miracle!" quoth the other to
match:

Again, more witness, and the case post-
poned.

30 "A miracle, ay — of lust and impudence;
"Hear my new reasons!" interposed the

first:

"— Coupled with more of mine!" pursued
his peer.

"Beside, the precedents, the authorities!"

From both at once a cry, with an echo,
that!

That was a firebrand at each fox's tail
Unleashed in a cornfield: soon spread flare

enough,
As hurtled thither and there heaped them-

selves
From earth's four corners, all authority
And precedent for putting wives to death,

40 Or letting wives live, sinful as they seem.
How legislated, now, in this respect,

Solon and his Athenians? Quote the code

Of Romulus and Rome! Justinian speak!
Nor modern Baldo, Bartolo be dumb!

The Roman voice was potent, plentiful;
*Cornelia de Sicariis*¹ hurried to help

Pompeia de Parricidiis; *Julia de*

Something-or-other jostled *Lex* this-and-
that;

King Solomon confirmed Apostle Paul:
That nice decision of Dolabella, eh?

That pregnant instance of Theodoric, oh!
Down to that choice example *Ælian*² gives

(An instance I find much insisted on)
Of the elephant who, brute-beast though

he were,
Yet understood and punished on the spot

His master's naughty spouse and faithless
friend;

A true tale which has edified each child,
Much more shall flourish favoured by our

court!
Pages of proof this way, and that way

proof,
And always — once again the cast post-

poned.

Thus wrangled, brangled, jangled they a
month,

Only on paper, pleadings all in print,
Nor ever was, except i' the brains of men,

More noise by word of mouth than you
hear now —

Till the court cut all short with "Judged,
your cause.

"Receive our sentence! Praise God!
We pronounce

"Count Guido devilish and damnable:
"His wife *Pompilia* in thought, word and

deed,
"Was perfect pure, he murdered her for

that:
"As for the Four who helped the One, all

Five —
"Why, let employer and hirelings share

alike
"In guilt and guilt's reward, the death

their due!"

So was the trial at end, do you suppose?

"Guilty you find him, death you doom him
to?

"Ay, were not Guido, more than needs, a
priest,

"Priest and to spare!" — this was a shot
reserved;

I learn this from epistles which begin
Here where the print ends, — see the pen

and ink
Of the advocate, the ready at a pinch! —

"My client boasts the clerkly privilege,"

"Has taken minor orders many enough,

¹ *Cornelia de Sicariis*, *Pompeia de Parricidiis*: the titles of Roman laws dealing with
homicide.

² *Ælian*: *De Animalium Natura*, xi. 15.

"Shows still sufficient chrism upon his pate
 "To neutralise a blood-stain: *presbyter*,¹
Primæ tonsuræ, subdiaconus,
Sacerdos, so he slips from underneath
 "Your power, the temporal, slides inside
 the robe
 "Of mother Church: to her we make
 appeal
 "By the Pope, the Church's head!"

A parlous plea,
 Put in with noticeable effect, it seems;
 "Since straight," — resumes the zealous
 orator,
 Making a friend acquainted with the
 facts, —
 "Once the word 'clericality' let fall,
 "Procedure stopped and freer breath was
 drawn
 "By all considerate and responsible
 Rome."

Quality, took the decent part, of course;
 Held by the husband, who was noble too:
 Or, for the matter of that, a churl would
 side
 With too-refined susceptibility,
 And honour which, tender in the extreme,
 Stung to the quick, must roughly right
 itself
 At all risks, not sit still and whine for law
 As a Jew would, if you squeezed him to the
 wall,
 Brisk-trotting through the Ghetto. Nay,
 it seems,
 Even the Emperor's Envoy had his say
 To say on the subject; might not see, un-
 moved,
 Civility menaced throughout Christendom
 By too harsh measure dealt her champion
 here.
 Lastly, what made all safe, the Pope was
 kind,
 From his youth up, reluctant to take life,
 If mercy might be just and yet show grace;
 Much more unlikely then, in extreme age,
 To take a life the general sense bade spare.
 'Twas plain that Guido would go scathe-
 less yet.

But human promise, oh, how short of
 shine!
 How topple down the piles of hope we rear!
 How history proves . . . nay, read Hero-
 dotus!²

Suddenly starting from a nap, as it were,
 A dog-sleep with one shut, one open orb,

¹ *Presbyter*, &c.: the names of orders in the Roman Church, of which the minor ones can be assumed without causing the holder to cease to be a layman; thus (a point of importance in Count Guido's case) they do not prevent him from marrying, yet they are sufficient to entitle him to appeal to the Pope, as head of the Church.

² *Herodotus*: e.g., the stories of Cræsus or of Xerxes.

Cried the Pope's³ great self, — Innocent
 by name

And nature too, and eighty-six years old,
 Antonio Pignatelli of Naples, Pope
 Who had trod many lands, known many
 deeds, 40

Probed many hearts, beginning with his
 own,

And now was far in readiness for God, —
 'Twas he who first bade leave those souls in
 peace,

Those Jansenists, re-nicknamed Molinists,⁴
 ('Gainst whom the cry went, like a frowsy
 tune,

Tickling men's ears — the sect for a
 quarter of an hour

I' the teeth of the world which, clown-like,
 loves to chew

Be it but a straw 'twixt work and whistling-
 while,

Taste some vituperation, bite away, 50
 Whether at marjoram-sprig or garlic-clove,
 Aught it may sport with, spoil, and then
 spit forth)

"Leave them alone," bade he, "those
 Molinists!

"Who may have other light than we per-
 ceive,

"Or why is it the whole world hates them
 thus?"

Also he peeled off that last scandal-rag
 Of Nepotism; and so observed the poor
 That men would merrily say, "Halt, deaf
 and blind,

"Who feed on fat things, leave the master's
 self

"To gather up the fragments of his feast, 60

"These be the nephews of Pope Inno-
 cent! —

"His own meal costs but five carlines⁵ a
 day,

"Poor-priest's allowance, for he claims no
 more."

— He cried of a sudden, this great good
 old Pope,

When they appealed in last resort to him,
 "I have mastered the whole matter: I
 nothing doubt.

"Though Guido stood forth priest from
 head to heel,

"Instead of, as alleged, a piece of one, —

"And further, were he, from the tonsured
 scalp

³ *The Pope*: Innocent XII., pope 1691-1700.

⁴ *Molinists*: followers of Miguel Molinos, a Spaniard, who published at Rome in 1675 a work of mystical or "quietistic" theology, entitled the *Guida Spirituale* or Spiritual Guide, which attracted much attention, but was declared heretical by the heads of the Church. Allusions to the orthodox dislike or dread of Molinism at this time recur frequently in this poem.

⁵ *Carlines*: a small silver coin, worth about twopence.

"To the sandaled sole of him, my son and Christ's,
 "Instead of touching us by finger-tip
 "As you assert, and pressing up so close
 "Only to set a blood-smutch on our robe, —
 "I and Christ would renounce all right in him.
 "Am I not Pope, and presently to die,
 "And busied how to render my account,
 "And shall I wait a day ere I decide
 "On doing or not doing justice here?
 10 "Cut off his head to-morrow by this time,
 "Hang up his four mates, two on either hand,
 "And end one business more!"

So said, so done —

Rather so writ, for the old Pope bade this,
 I find, with his particular chirograph,
 His own no such infirm hand, Friday night;
 And next day, February Twenty Two,
 Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety Eight,
 — Not at the proper head-and-hanging-
 place
 On bridge-foot close by Castle Angelo,
 20 Where custom somewhat staled the spec-
 tacle,
 ('Twas not so well i' the way of Rome,
 beside,
 The noble Rome, the Rome of Guido's
 rank)
 But at the city's newer gayer end, —
 The cavalcading promenading place
 Beside the gate and opposite the church
 Under the Pincian gardens green with
 Spring,
 'Neath the obelisk¹ 'twixt the fountains in
 the Square,
 Did Guido and his fellows find their fate,
 All Rome for witness, and — my writer
 adds —
 30 Remonstrant in its universal grief,
 Since Guido had the suffrage of all Rome.

This is the bookful; thus far take the
 truth,
 The untempered gold, the fact untampered
 with,
 The mere ring-metal ere the ring be made!
 And what has hitherto come of it? Who
 preserves
 The memory of this Guido, and his wife
 Pompilia, more than Ademollo's name,
 The etcher of those prints, two crazie each,
 Saved by a stone from snowing broad the
 Square
 40 With scenic backgrounds? Was this truth
 of force?

¹ *Obelisk*: the obelisk brought from Egypt by Augustus and placed in the Circus Maximus; whence, having fallen down, it was removed by Pope Sixtus V. in 1589, and set up in the Piazza del Popolo, below the Monte Pincio,

Able to take its own part as truth should,
 Sufficient, self-sustaining? Why, if so —
 Yonder's a fire, into it goes my book,
 As who shall say me nay, and what the
 loss?
 You know the tale already: I may ask,
 Rather than think to tell you, more
 thereof, —
 Ask you not merely who were he and she,
 Husband and wife, what manner of man-
 kind,
 But how you hold concerning this and that
 Other yet-unnamed actor in the piece. 50
 The young frank handsome courtly Canon,
 now,
 The priest, declared the lover of the wife,
 He who, no question, did elope with her,
 For certain bring the tragedy about,
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi; — his strange
 course
 I' the matter, was it right or wrong or both?
 Then the old couple, slaughtered with the
 wife
 By the husband as accomplices in crime,
 Those Comparini, Pietro and his spouse, —
 What say you to the right or wrong of that, 60
 When, at a known name whispered through
 the door
 Of a lone villa on a Christmas night,
 It opened that the joyous hearts inside
 Might welcome as it were an angel-guest
 Come in Christ's name to knock and enter,
 sup
 And satisfy the loving ones he saved;
 And so did welcome devils and their
 death?
 I have been silent on that circumstance
 Although the couple passed for close of kin
 To wife and husband, were by some ac- 70
 counts
 Pompilia's very parents: you know best.
 Also that infant the great joy was for,
 That Gaetano, the wife's two-weeks' babe,
 The husband's first-born child, his son and
 heir,
 Whose birth and being turned his night to
 day —
 Why must the father kill the mother thus
 Because she bore his son and saved him-
 self?
 Well, British Public, ye who like me not,
 (God love you!) and will have your proper
 laugh
 At the dark question, laugh it! I laugh 80
 first.
 Truth must prevail, the proverb vows; and
 truth
 — Here is it all i' the book at last, as first
 There it was all i' the heads and hearts of
 Rome
 Gentle and simple, never to fall nor fade
 Nor be forgotten. Yet, a little while,
 The passage of a century or so

Decads thrice five, and here's time paid his tax,
 Oblivion gone home with her harvesting,
 And all left smooth again as scythe could shave.
 Far from beginning with you London folk,
 I took my book to Rome first, tried truth's power
 On likely people. "Have you met such names?"
 "Is a tradition extant of such facts?"
 "Your law-courts stand, your records frown a-row:
 "What if I rove and rummage?" "— Why, you'll waste
 "Your pains and end as wise as you began!"
 Everyone snickered: "names and facts thus old
 "Are newer much than Europe news we find
 "Down in to-day's *Diario*. Records, quotha?
 "Why, the French burned them, what else do the French?
 "The rap-and-rending nation! And it tells
 "Against the Church, no doubt, — another gird
 "At the Temporality, your Trial, of course?"
 "— Quite otherwise this time," submitted I;
 "Clean for the Church and dead against the world,
 "The flesh and the devil, does it tell for once."
 "— The rarer and the happier! All the same,
 "Content you with your treasure of a book,
 "And waive what's wanting! Take a friend's advice!
 "It's not the custom of the country. Mend
 "Your ways indeed and we may stretch a point:
 "Go get you manned by Manning and new manned
 "By Newman and, mayhap, wise-manned to boot
 "By Wiseman, and we'll see or else we won't!
 "Thanks meantime for the story, long and strong,
 "A pretty piece of narrative enough,
 "Which scarce ought so to drop out, one would think,
 "From the more curious annals of our kind.
 "Do you tell the story, now, in off-hand style,
 "Straight from the book? Or simply here and there,
 "The while you vault it through the loose and large)
 "Hang to a hint? Or is there book at all,

"And don't you deal in poetry, make-believe,
 "And the white lies it sounds like?"

Yes and no!

From the book, yes; thence bit by bit I dug
 The lingot¹ truth, that memorable day, 4c
 Assayed and knew my piecemeal gain was gold, —
 Yes; but from something else surpassing that,
 Something of mine which, mixed up with the mass,
 Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.
 Fancy with fact is just one fact the more;
 To-wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,
 Thridded and so thrown fast the facts else free,
 As right through ring and ring runs the djereed²
 And binds the loose, one bar without a break.
 I fused my live soul and that inert stuff, 5c
 Before attempting smithcraft, on the night
 After the day when, — truth thus grasped and gained, —
 The book was shut and done with and laid by
 On the cream-coloured massive agate, broad
 'Neath the twin cherubs in the tarnished frame
 O' the mirror, tall thence to the ceiling-top.
 And from the reading, and that slab I leant
 My elbow on, the while I read and read,
 I turned, to free myself and find the world,
 And stepped out on the narrow terrace, 6c
 Over the street and opposite the church,
 And paced its lozenge-brickwork sprinkled cool;
 Because Felice - church - side stretched, aglow
 Through each square window fringed for festival,
 Whence came the clear voice of the cloistered ones
 Chanting a chant made for midsummer nights —
 I know not what particular praise of God,
 It always came and went with June. Beneath
 I' the street, quick shown by openings of the sky
 When flame fell silently from cloud to 7c
 cloud,

¹ *Lingot*: the same word as ingot; here = the solid mass of truth.

² *Djereed*: an Arab spear. The allusion is to a game analogous to tilting at a ring.

Richer than that gold snow¹ Jove rained
 on Rhodes,
 The townsmen walked by twos and threes,
 and talked,
 Drinking the blackness in default of air —
 A busy human sense beneath my feet:
 While in and out the terrace-plants, and
 round
 One branch of tall datura, waxed and
 waned
 The lamp-fly lured there, wanting the white
 flower.

Over the roof o' the lighted church I looked
 A bowshot to the street's end, north away
 10 Out of the Roman gate to the Roman road
 By the river, till I felt the Apennine.
 And there would lie Arezzo,² the man's
 town,

The woman's trap and cage and torture-
 place,

Also the stage where the priest played his
 part,

A spectacle for angels, — ay, indeed,
 There lay Arezzo! Farther then I fared,
 Feeling my way on through the hot and
 dense,

Romeward, until I found the wayside inn
 By Castelnuovo's few mean hut-like homes
 20 Huddled together on the hill-foot bleak,
 Bare, broken only by that tree or two
 Against the sudden bloody splendour
 poured

Cursewise in day's departure by the sun
 O'er the low house-roof of that squalid inn
 Where they three, for the first time and the
 last,

Husband and wife and priest, met face to
 face.

Whence I went on again, the end was near,
 Step by step, missing none and marking all,
 Till Rome itself, the ghastly goal, I reached.

30 Why, all the while, — how could it other-
 wise? —

The life in me ablished the death of things,
 Deep calling unto deep: as then and there
 Acted itself over again once more

The tragic piece. I saw with my own eyes
 In Florence as I trod the terrace, breathed
 The beauty and the fearfulness of night,
 How it had run, this round from Rome to
 Rome —

Because, you are to know, they lived at
 Rome,

Pompilia's parents, as they thought them-
 selves,

40 Two poor ignoble hearts who did their best
 Part God's way, part the other way than
 God's,

To somehow make a shift and scramble
 through

¹ That gold snow: the shower of gold in
 which Jove visited Danaë.

² Arezzo: in Tuscany, about 40 miles south-
 east of Florence.

The world's mud, careless if it splashed
 and spoiled,
 Provided they might so hold high, keep —
 clean

Their child's soul, one soul white enough
 for three,

And lift it to whatever star should stoop,
 What possible sphere of purer life than
 theirs

Should come in aid of whiteness hard to
 save.

I saw the star stoop, that they strained to
 touch,

And did touch and depose their treasure on, 30
 As Guido Franceschini took away

Pompilia to be his for evermore,
 While they sang "Now let us depart in
 peace,

"Having beheld thy glory, Guido's wife!"
 I saw the star supposed, but fog o' the
 fen,

Gilded star-fashion by a glint from hell;
 Having been heaved up, haled on its gross
 way,

By hands unguessed before, invisible help
 From a dark brotherhood, and specially

Two obscure goblin creatures, fox-faced 60
 this,

Cat-clawed the other, called his next of kin
 By Guido the main monster, — cloaked
 and caped,

Making as they were priests, to mock God
 more, —

Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo.
 These who had rolled the starlike pest to
 Rome

And stationed it to suck up and absorb
 The sweetness of Pompilia, rolled again

That bloated bubble, with her soul inside,
 Back to Arezzo and a palace there —

Or say, a fissure in the honest earth 7
 Whence long ago had curled the vapour
 first,

Brown big by nether fires to appal day:
 It touched home, broke, and blasted far
 and wide.

I saw the cheated couple find the cheat
 And guess what foul rite they were cap-
 tured for, —

Too fain to follow over hill and dale
 That child of theirs caught up thus in the
 cloud

And carried by the Prince o' the Power of
 the Air

Whither he would, to wilderness or sea.
 I saw them, in the potency of fear,

Break somehow through the satyr-family 8
 (For a grey mother with a monkey-mien,
 Mopping and mowing, was apparent too,
 As, confident of capture, all took hands
 And danced about the captives in a ring.)
 — Saw them break through, breathe safe,
 at Rome again,
 Saved by the selfish instinct, losing so

Their loved one left with haters. These I
 saw,
 In recrudescency of baffled hate,
 Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge
 From body and soul thus left them: all
 was sure,
 Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene ring
 traced,
 The victim stripped and prostrate: what of
 God?
 The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash,
 Quenched lay their cauldron, cowered i'
 the dust the crew,
 As, in a glory of armour like Saint George,
 Out again sprang the young good beaut-
 ous priest
 Bearing away the lady in his arms,
 Saved for a splendid minute and no
 more.
 For, whom i' the path did that priest come
 upon,
 He and the poor lost lady borne so brave.
 — Checking the song of praise in me, had
 else
 Swelled to the full for God's will done on
 earth —
 Whom but a dusk misfeatured messenger,
 No other than the angel of this life,
 Whose care is lest men see too much at
 once.
 He made the sign, such God-glimpse must
 suffice,
 Nor prejudice the Prince o' the Power of
 the Air,
 Whose ministration piles us overhead
 What we call, first, earth's roof and, last,
 heaven's floor,
 Now grate o' the trap, then outlet of the
 cage:
 So took the lady, left the priest alone,
 And once more canopied the world with
 black.
 But through the blackness I saw Rome
 again,
 And where a solitary villa stood
 In a lone garden-quarter: it was eve,
 The second of the year, and oh so cold!
 Ever and anon there flittered through the
 air
 A snow-flake, and a scanty couch of snow
 Crusted the grass-walk and the garden-
 mould.
 All was grave, silent, sinister, — when,
 ha?
 Glimmeringly did a pack of were-wolves
 pad
 The snow, those flames were Guido's eyes
 in front,
 And all five found and footed it, the track,
 To where a threshold-streak of warmth
 and light
 Betrayed the villa-door with life inside,
 While an inch outside were those blood-
 bright eyes,
 And black lips wrinkling o'er the flash of
 teeth,
 And tongues that lolled — Oh God that
 madest man!
 They parleyed in their language. Then
 one whined —
 That was the policy and master-stroke —
 Deep in his throat whispered what seemed
 a name —
 "Open to Caponsacchi!" Guido cried:
 "Gabriell!" cried Lucifer at Eden-gate.
 Wide as a heart, opened the door at once,
 Showing the joyous couple, and their child
 The two-weeks' mother, to the wolves, the
 wolves
 To them: Close eyes! And when the
 corpses lay
 Stark-stretched, and those the wolves, their
 wolf-work done,
 Were safe-embosomed by the night again,
 I knew a necessary change in things;
 As when the worst watch of the night gives
 way,
 And there comes duly, to take cognisance,
 The scrutinising eye-point of some star —
 And who despairs of a new daybreak now?
 Lo, the first ray protruded on those five!
 It reached them, and each felon writhed
 transfixed
 Awhile they palpitated on the spear
 Motionless over Tophet: stand or fall?
 "I say, the spear should fall — should
 stand, I say!"
 Cried the world come to judgment, grant-
 ing grace
 Or dealing doom according to world's wont,
 Those world's-bystanders grouped on
 Rome's cross-road
 At prick and summons of the primal curse
 Which bids man love as well as make a lie.
 There prattled they, discoursed the right
 and wrong,
 Turned wrong to right, proved wolves
 sheep and sheep wolves,
 So that you scarce distinguished fell from
 fleece;
 Till out spoke a great guardian of the fold,
 Stood up, put forth his hand that held the
 crook,
 And motioned that the arrested point de-
 cline:
 Horribly off, the wriggling dead-weight
 reeled,
 Rushed to the bottom and lay ruined there.
 Though still at the pit's mouth, despite the
 smoke
 O' the burning, tarriers turned again to
 talk
 And trim the balance, and detect at least
 A touch of wolf in what showed whitest
 sheep,
 A cross of sheep redeeming the whole
 wolf, —
 Vex truth a little longer: — less and less,

Because years came and went, and more
and more
Brought new lies with them to be loved in
turn.

Till all at once the memory of the thing, —
The fact that, wolves or sheep, such crea-
tures were, —

Which hitherto, however men supposed,
Had somehow plain and pillar-like pre-
vailed

In the midst of them, indisputably fact,
Granite, time's tooth should grate against,
not graze, —

Why, this proved sandstone, friable, fast to
fly

10 And give its grain away at wish o' the wind.
Ever and ever more diminutive,
Base gone, shaft lost, only entablature,
Dwindled into no bigger than a book,
Lay of the column; and that little, left
By the roadside 'mid the ordure, shards and
weeds.

Until I haply, wandering that lone way,
Kicked it up, turned it over, and recog-
nised,

For all the crumblement, this abacus,¹
This square old yellow book, — could
calculate

20 By this the lost proportions of the style.

This was it from, my fancy with those
facts,

I used to tell the tale, turned gay to grave,
But lacked a listener seldom; such alloy,
Such substance of me interfused the gold
Which, wrought into a shapely ring there-
with,

Hammèred and filed, fingered and
favoured, last

Lay ready for the renovating wash
O' the water. "How much of the tale was
true?"

I disappeared; the book grew all in all;
30 The lawyers' pleadings swelled back to
their size, —

Doubled in two, the crease upon them yet,
For more commodity of carriage, see! —
And these are letters, veritable sheets
That brought posthaste the news to Flor-
ence, writ

At Rome the day Count Guido died, we
find,

To stay the craving of a client there,
Who bound the same and so produced my
book.

Lovers of dead truth, did ye fare the worse?
Lovers of live truth, found ye false my tale?

40 Well, now; there's nothing in nor out o'
the world

¹ *Abacus*: the upper part of the capital of
a pillar, on which the architrave rests. In its
earliest forms it is generally square in shape.

Good except truth: yet this, the some-
thing else,

What's this then, which proves good yet
seems untrue?

This that I mixed with truth, motions of
mine

That quickened, made the inertness malleo-
lable

O' the gold was not mine, — what's your
name for this?

Are means to the end, themselves in part
the end?

Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact too?
The somehow may be thishow.

I find first

Writ down for very A B C of fact,
"In the beginning God made heaven and 50
earth;"

From which, no matter with what lisp, I
spell

And speak you out a consequence — that
man,

Man, — as befits the made, the inferior
thing, —

Purposed, since made, to grow, not make
in turn,

Yet forced to try and make, else fail to
grow, —

Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp and
gain

The good beyond him, — which attempt is
growth, —

Repeats God's process in man's due de-
gree,

Attaining man's proportionate result, —
Creates, no, but resuscitates, perhaps. 60

Inalienable, the arch-prerogative
Which turns thought, act — conceives,
expresses too!

No less, man, bounded, yearning to be
free,

May so project his surplusage of soul
In search of body, so add self to self

Be owning what lay ownerless before, —
So find, so fill full, so appropriate forms —

That, although nothing which had never
life

Shall get life from him, be, not having been,
Yet, something dead may get to live again, 70

Something with too much life or not
enough,

Which, either way imperfect, ended once:
An end whereat man's impulse intervenes,

Makes new beginning, starts the dead
alive,

Completes the incomplete and saves the
thing.

Man's breath were vain to light a virgin
wick, —

Half-burned-out, all but quite-quenched
wicks o' the lamp

Stationed for temple-service on this earth,
These indeed let him breathe on and
relume!

For such man's feat is, in the due degree,
 — Mimic creation, galvanism for life,
 But still a glory portioned in the scale.
 Why did the mage say, — feeling as we are
 wont
 For truth, and stopping midway short of
 truth,
 And resting on a lie, — "I raise a ghost"?
 "Because," he taught adepts, "man
 makes not man.
 "Yet by a special gift, an art of arts,
 "More insight and more oversight and
 much more
 "Will to use both of these than boast my
 mates,
 "I can detach from me, commission forth
 "Half of my soul; which in its pilgrimage
 "O'er old unwandered waste ways of the
 world,
 "May chance upon some fragment of a
 whole,
 "Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim disuse,
 "Smoking flax that fed fire once: prompt
 therein
 'I enter, spark-like, put old powers to
 play,
 "Push lines out to the limit, lead forth last
 "(By a moonrise through a ruin of a crypt)
 "What shall be mistily seen, murmuringly
 heard,
 "Mistakenly felt: then write my name
 with Faust's!"
 Oh, Faust, why Faust? Was not Elisha
 once? —
 Who bade them lay his staff on a corpse-
 face.
 There was no voice, no hearing: he went
 in
 Therefore, and shut the door upon them
 twain,
 And prayed unto the Lord: and he went
 up
 And lay upon the corpse, dead on the
 couch,
 And put his mouth upon its mouth, his
 eyes
 Upon its eyes, his hands upon its hands,
 And stretched him on the flesh; the flesh
 waxed warm:
 And he returned, walked to and fro the
 house,
 And went up, stretched him on the flesh
 again,
 And the eyes opened. 'Tis a credible feat
 With the right man and way.
 Enough of me!
 The Book! I turn its medicinable leaves
 In London now till, as in Florence erst,
 A spirit laughs and leaps through every
 limb,
 And lights my eye, and lifts me by the
 hair,
 Letting me have my will again with these
 — How title I the dead alive once more?

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine,
 Descended of an ancient house, though
 poor,
 A beak-nosed bushy-bearded black-haired
 lord,
 Lean, pallid, low of stature yet robust,
 Fifty years old, — having four years ago
 Married Pompilia Comparini, young,
 Good, beautiful, at Rome, where she was
 born,
 And brought her to Arezzo, where they
 lived
 Unhappy lives, whatever curse the
 cause, —
 This husband, taking four accomplices, 50
 Followed this wife to Rome, where she
 was fled
 From their Arezzo to find peace again,
 In convoy, eight months earlier, of a priest,
 Aretine also, of still nobler birth,
 Giuseppe Caponsacchi, — caught her there
 Quiet in a villa on a Christmas night,
 With only Pietro and Violante by,
 Both her putative parents; killed the three,
 Aged, they, seventy each, and she, seven-
 teen,
 And, two weeks since, the mother of his 60
 babe
 First-born and heir to what the style was
 worth
 O' the Guido who determined, dared and
 did
 This deed just as he purposed point by
 point.
 Then, bent upon escape, but hotly pressed,
 And captured with his co-mates that same
 night,
 He, brought to trial, stood on this de-
 fence —
 Injury to his honour caused the act;
 And since his wife was false, (as manifest
 By flight from home in such companion-
 ship,)
 Death, punishment deserved of the false 70
 wife
 And faithless parents who abetted her
 I' the flight aforesaid, wronged nor God
 nor man.
 "Nor false she, nor yet faithless they,"
 replied
 The accuser; "cloaked and masked this
 murder glooms;
 "True was Pompilia, loyal too the pair;
 "Out of the man's own heart a monster
 curled
 "Which — crime coiled with connivancy
 at crime —
 "His victim's breast, he tells you, hatched
 and reared;
 "Uncoil we and stretch stark the worm of
 hell!"
 A month the trial swayed this way and that 80
 Ere judgment settled down on Guido's
 guilt;

Then was the Pope, that good Twelfth
Innocent,
Appealed to: who well weighed what went
before,
Affirmed the guilt and gave the guilty
doom.

Let this old woe step on the stage again!
Act itself o'er anew for men to judge,
Not by the very sense and sight indeed —
(Which take at best imperfect cognisance
Since, how heart moves brain, and how
both move hand,

What mortal ever in entirety saw?)
10 — No dose of purer truth than man digests,
But truth with falsehood, milk that feeds
him now,
Not strong meat he may get to bear some
day. —

To-wit, by voices we call evidence,
Upoar in the echo, live fact deadened
down,
Talked over, bruited abroad, whispered
away,

Yet helping us to all we seem to hear:
For how else know we save by worth of
word?

Here are the voices presently shall sound
In due succession. First, the world's
outcry

20 Around the rush and ripple of any fact
Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth
face of things;

The world's guess, as it crowds the bank
o' the pool,

At what were figure and substance, by
their splash:

Then, by vibrations in the general mind,
At depth of deed already out of reach.

This threefold murder of the day before, —
Say, Half-Rome's feel after the vanished
truth;

Honest enough, as the way is: all the
same,

Harbouring in the centre of its sense

30 A hidden germ of failure, shy but sure,
To neutralise that honesty and leave
That feel for truth at fault, as the way is
too.

Some prepossession such as starts amiss,
By but a hair's breadth at the shoulder-
blade,

The arm o' the feeler, dip he ne'er so bold;
So leads arm waveringly, lets fall wide

O' the mark its finger, sent to find and fix
Truth at the bottom, that deceptive speck.

With this Half-Rome, — the source of
swerving, call

40 Over-belief in Guido's right and wrong
Rather than in Pompilia's wrong and
right:

Who shall say how, who shall say why?
'Tis there —

The instinctive theorising whence a fact
Looks to the eye as the eye likes the look.
Gossip in a public place, a sample-speech.
Some worthy, with his previous hint to
find

A husband's side the safer, and no whit
Aware he is not Æacus¹ the while, —

How such an one supposes and states fact
To whosoever of a multitude

Will listen, and perhaps prolong thereby 54

The not-unpleasant flutter at the breast,
Born of a certain spectacle shut in

By the church Lorenzo opposite. So,
they lounge

Midway the mouth o' the street, on Corso
side,

'Twixt palace Fiano and palace Ruspoli,
Linger and listen; keeping clear o' the
crowd,

Yet wishful one could lend that crowd
one's eyes,

(So universal is its plague of squint)

And make hearts beat our time that flutter 64
false:

— All for the truth's sake, mere truth,
nothing else!

How Half-Rome found for Guido much
excuse.

Next, from Rome's other half, the opposite
feel

For truth with a like swerve, like unsuc-
cess, —

Or if success, by no skill but more luck
This time, through siding rather with the
wife,

Because a fancy-fit inclined that way,
Than with the husband. One wears

drab, one pink;
Who wears pink, ask him "Which shall

win the race,

"Of coupled runners like as egg and egg?" 70

"— Why, if I must choose, he with the
pink scarf."

Doubtless for some such reason choice
fell here.

A piece of public talk to correspond
At the next stage of the story; just a day
Let pass and new day brings the proper
change.

Another sample-speech i' the market-place
O' the Barberini by the Capucins;

Where the old Triton, at his fountain-
sport,

Bernini's creature plated to the paps, 84

Puffs up steel sleet which breaks to dia-
mond dust,

A spray of sparkles snorted from his
conch,

High over the caritellas, out o' the wav

¹ Æacus: the colleague of Minos and Rhadamanthus as judge of the nether world; hence a type of impartiality.

O' the motley merchandising multitude.
Our murder has been done three days ago,
The frost is over and gone, the south wind
laughs,

And, to the very tiles of each red roof
A-smoke i' the sunshine, Rome lies gold
and glad:

So, listen how, to the other half of Rome,
Pompilia seemed a saint and martyr both!

Then, yet another day let come and go,
With pause prelusive still of novelty,

Hear a fresh speaker! — neither this nor
that

Half-Rome aforesaid; something bred of
both:

One and one breed the inevitable three.
Such is the personage harangues you next;
The elaborated product, *tertium quid*:
Rome's first commotion in subsidence
gives

The curd o' the cream, flower o' the wheat,
as it were,

And finer sense o' the city. Is this plain?
You get a reasoned statement of the case,
Eventual verdict of the curious few

Who care to sift a business to the bran
Nor coarsely bolt it like the simpler sort.
Here, after ignorance, instruction speaks;
Here, clarity of candour, history's soul,
The critical mind, in short: no gossip-
guess.

What the superior social section thinks,
In person of some man of quality
Who, — breathing musk from lace-work
and brocade,

His solitaire amid the flow of frill,
Powdered peruke on nose, and bag at
back,

And cane dependent from the ruffled
wrist, —

Harangues in silvery and selectest phrase
'Neath waxlight in a glorified saloon
Where mirrors multiply the girandole:¹
Courting the approbation of no mob,
But Eminence This and All-Illustrious
That

Who take snuff softly, range in well-bred
ring,

Card-table-quitters for observance' sake,
Around the argument, the rational word —
Still, spite its weight and worth, a sample-
speech.

How Quality dissertated on the case.

So much for Rome and rumour; smoke
comes first:

Once let smoke rise untroubled, we descry
Clearlier what tongues of flame may spire
and spit

To eye and ear, each with appropriate
tinge

¹ *Girandole*: a branched candlestick.

According to its food, or pure or foul.

The actors, no mere rumours of the act,
Intervene. First you hear Count Guido's
voice,

In a small chamber that adjoins the court,
Where Governor and Judges, summoned
thence,

Tommato, Venturini and the rest,

Find the accused ripe for declaring truth.
Soft-cushioned sits he; yet shifts seat,
shirks touch,

As, with a twitchy brow and wincing lip
And cheek that changes to all kinds of
white,

He proffers his defence, in tones subdued
Near to mock-mildness now, so mournful
seems

The obtuser sense truth fails to satisfy;
Now, moved, from pathos at the wrong
endured,

To passion; for the natural man is roused
At fools who first do wrong then pour the
blame

Of their wrong-doing, Satan-like, on Job.
Also his tongue at times is hard to curb;
Incisive, nigh satiric bites the phrase,
Rough-raw, yet somehow claiming privi-
lege

— It is so hard for shrewdness to admit
Folly means no harm when she calls black
white!

— Eruption momentary at the most,
Modified forthwith by a fall o' the fire,
Sage acquiescence; for the world's the
world,

And, what it errs in, Judges rectify:
He feels he has a fist, then folds his arms
Crosswise and makes his mind up to be
meek.

And never once does he detach his eye
From those ranged there to slay him or to
save,

But does his best man's-service for him-
self,

Despite, — what twitches brow and makes
lip wince, —

His limbs' late taste of what was called
the Cord,

Or Vigil-torture more facetiously.

Even so; they were wont to tease the
truth

Out of loth witness (toying, trifling time)
By torture: 'twas a trick, a vice of the
age,

Here, there and everywhere, what would
you have?

Religion used to tell Humanity
She gave him warrant or denied him
course.

And since the course was much to his own
mind,

Of pinching flesh and pulling bone from
bone

To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,

54

6a

70

8a

Nor whisper of a warning stopped the way,
He, in their joint behalf, the burly slave,
Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all
recusants,

While, prim in place, Religion over-
looked;

And so had done till doomsday, never a sign
Nor sound of interference from her mouth,
But that at last the burly slave wiped brow,
Let eye give notice as if soul were there,
Muttered "'Tis a vile trick, foolish more
than vile,

10 "Should have been counted sin; I make
it so:

"At any rate no more of it for me —

"Nay, for I break the torture-engine
thus!"

Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
Look round for help and see none, smile
and say,

"What, broken is the rack? Well done
of thee!

"Did I forget to abrogate its use?

"Be the mistake in common with us both!

"— One more fault our blind age shall
answer for,

"Down in my book denounced though it
must be

20 "Somewhere. Henceforth find truth by
milder means!"

Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee

To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
And pick such place out, we should wait
indeed!

That is all history: and what is not now,
Was then, defendants found it to their
cost.

How Guido, after being tortured, spoke.

Also hear Caponsacchi who comes next,
Man and priest — could you comprehend
the coil! —

In days when that was rife which now is
rare.

30 How, mingling each its multifarious wires,
Now heaven, now earth, now heaven and
earth at once,

Had plucked at and perplexed their pup-
pet here,

Played off the young frank personable
priest;

Sworn fast and tonsured plain heaven's
celibate,

And yet earth's clear-accepted servitor,
A courtly spiritual Cupid, squire of dames

By law of love and mandate of the mode.
The Church's own, or why parade her
seal,

Wherefore that chrim and consecrative
work?

40 Yet verily the world's, or why go badged
A prince of sonneteers and lutanists,¹

Show colour of each vanity in vogue
Borne with decorum due on blameless
breast?

All that is changed now, as he tells the
court

How he had played the part excepted at;
Tells it, moreover, now the second time:

Since, for his cause of scandal, his own
share

I' the flight from home and husband of
the wife,

He has been censured, punished in a sort
By relegation, — exile, we should say, 50

To a short distance for a little time, —
Whence he is summoned on a sudden now,

Informed that she, he thought to save, is
lost,

And, in a breath, bidden re-tell his tale,
Since the first telling somehow missed
effect,

And then advise in the matter. There
stands he,

While the same grim black-panelled
chamber blinks

As though rubbed shiny with the sins of
Rome

Told the same oak for ages — wave-
washed wall

Against which sets a sea of wickedness. 60

There, where you yesterday heard Guido
speak,

Speaks Caponsacchi; and there face him
too

Tommato, Venturini and the rest

Who, eight months earlier, scarce re-
pressed the smile,

Forewent the wink; waived recognition so
Of peccadillos incident to youth,

Especially youth high-born; for youth
means love,

Vows can't change nature, priests are only
men,

And love likes stratagem and subterfuge
Which age, that once was youth, should 70

recognise,

May blame, but needs not press too hard
upon.

Here sit the old Judges then, but with no
grace

Of reverend carriage, magisterial port:
For why? The accused of eight months
since, — the same

Who cut the conscious figure of a fool,
Changed countenance, dropped bashful
gaze to ground,

While hesitating for an answer then, —
Now is grown judge himself, terrifies now

This, now the other culprit called a judge,
Whose turn it is to stammer and look 80

strange,

As he speaks rapidly, angrily, speech that
smites:

And they keep silence, bear blow after
blow,

¹ *Lutanist*: player on the lute.

Because the seeming-solitary man,
Speaking for God, may have an audience
too,
Invisible, no discreet judge provokes.
How the priest Caponsacchi said his say.

Then a soul sighs its lowest and its last
After the loud ones, — so much breath re-
mains

Unused by the four-days'-dying; for she
lived

Thus long, miraculously long, 'twas
thought,

Just that Pompilia might defend herself.

10 How, while the hireling and the alien
stoop,

Comfort, yet question, — since the time
is brief,

And folk, allowably inquisitive,

Encircle the low pallet where she lies

In the good house that helps the poor to
die, —

Pompilia tells the story of her life.

For friend and lover, — leech and man of
law

Do service; busy helpful ministrants

As varied in their calling as their mind,

Temper and age: and yet from all of
these,

20 About the white bed under the arched
roof,

Is somehow, as it were, evolved a one, —
Small separate sympathies combined and

large,
Nothings that were, grown something very
much:

As if the bystanders gave each his straw,
All he had, though a trifle in itself,

Which, plaited all together, made a Cross
Fit to die looking on and praying with,

Just as well as if ivory or gold.

So, to the common kindness she speaks,

30 There being scarce more privacy at the
last

For mind than body: but she is used to
bear,

And only unused to the brotherly look.
How she endeavoured to explain her life.

Then, since a Trial ensued, a touch o' the
same

To sober us, flustered with frothy talk,
And teach our common sense its helpless-

ness.

For why deal simply with divining-rod,
Scrape where we fancy secret sources flow,

And ignore law, the recognised machine,

40 Elaborate display of pipe and wheel
Framed into choke, pump up and pour
apace

Truth till a flowery foam shall wash the
world?

The patent truth-extracting process, —
ha?

Let us make that grave mystery turn one
wheel,

Give you a single grind of law at least!

One orator, of two on either side,

Shall teach us the puissance of the tongue
— That is, o' the pen which simulated

tongue

On paper and saved all except the sound
Which never was. Law's speech beside 50

law's thought?

That were too stunning, too immense an
odds:

That point of vantage law lets nobly pass.
One lawyer shall admit us to behold

The manner of the making out a case,
First fashion of a speech; the chick in

egg,

The masterpiece law's bosom incubates.
How Don Giaicinto of the Arcangeli,

Called Procurator of the Poor at Rome,
Now advocate for Guido and his mates, —

The jolly learned man of middle age, 60
Cheek and jowl all in laps with fat and
law,

Mirthful as mighty, yet, as great hearts
use,

Despite the name and fame that tempt
our flesh,

Constant to that devotion of the hearth,
Still captive in those dear domestic ties! —

How he, — having a cause to triumph
with,

All kind of interests to keep intact,
More than one efficacious personage

To tranquillise, conciliate and secure,
And above all, public anxiety 70

To quiet, show its Guido in good hands, —
Also, as if such burdens were too light,

A certain family-feast to claim his care,
The birthday-banquet for the only son —

Paternity at smiling strife with law —
How he brings both to buckle in one

bond;
And, thick at throat, with waterish under-

eye,
Turns to his task and settles in his seat

And puts his utmost means in practice
now:

Wheezes out law-phrase, whiffles Latin 80
forth,

And, just as though roast lamb would
never be,

Makes logic levigate¹ the big crime
small:

Rubs palm on palm, rakes foot with itchy
foot,

Conceives and inchoates the argument,
Sprinkling each flower appropriate to the

time,
— Ovidian quip or Ciceronian crank,

A-bubble in the larynx while he laughs,
As he had fritters deep down frying there.

¹ Levigate: make light.

How he turns, twists, and tries the oily
thing
Shall be — first speech for Guido 'gainst
the Fisc.

Then with a skip as it were from heel to
head,
Leaving yourselves fill up the middle bulk
O' the Trial, reconstruct its shape august,
From such exordium clap we to the close;
Give you, if we dare wing to such a height,
The absolute glory in some full-grown
speech

On the other side, some finished butterfly,
10 Some breathing diamond-flake with leaf-
gold fans,

That takes the air, no trace of worm it was,
Or cabbage-bed it had production from.
Giovambattista o' the Bottini, Fisc,
Pompilia's patron by the chance of the
hour,

To-morrow her persecutor, — composite,
he,

As becomes who must meet such various
calls —

Odds of age joined in him with ends of
youth.

A man of ready smile and facile tear,
Improvised hopes, despairs at nod and
beck,

20 And language — ah, the gift of eloquence!
Language that goes, goes, easy as a glove,
O'er good and evil, smoothen's both to one.
Rashness helps caution with him, fires the
straw,

In free enthusiastic careless fit,
On the first proper pinnacle of rock
Which offers, as reward for all that zeal,
To lure some bark to foundering and bring
gain:

While calm sits Caution, rapt with heaven-
ward eye,

A true confessor's gaze, amid the glare
30 Beaconing to the breaker, death and hell.

"Well done, thou good and faithful!" she
approves:

"Hadst thou let slip a faggot to the beach,
"The crew might surely spy thy precipice
"And save their boat; the simple and the
slow

"Might so, forsooth, forestall the wrecker's
fee!

"Let the next crew be wise and hail in
time!"

Just so compounded is the outside man,
Blue juvenile pure eye and pippin cheek,
And brow all prematurely soiled and
seamed

40 With sudden age, bright devastated hair.
Ah, but you miss the very tones o' the
voice,

The scannell pipe that screams in heights
of head,

As, in his modest studio, all alone,

The tall wight stands a-tiptoe, strives and
strains,

Both eyes shut, like the cockerel that would
crow,

Tries to his own self amorously o'er
What never will be uttered else than so —
Since to the four walls, Forum and Mars'
Hill,

Speaks out the poesy which, penned, turns
prose.

Clavecinist¹ debarred his instrument, 50

He yet thrums — shirking neither turn nor
trill,

With desperate finger on dumb table-
edge —

The sovereign rondo, shall conclude his
Suite,

Charm an imaginary audience there,
From old Corelli to young Haendel, both
I' the flesh at Rome, ere he perforce go
print

The cold black score, mere music for the
mind —

The last speech against Guido and his
gang,

With special end to prove Pompilia pure.
How the Fisc vindicates Pompilia's fame. 60

Then comes the all but end, the ultimate
Judgment save yours. Pope Innocent the
Twelfth,

Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute,
With prudence, probity — and what beside
From the other world he feels impress² at
times,

Having attained to fourscore years and
six, —

How, when the court found Guido and
the rest

Guilty, but law supplied a subterfuge
And passed the final sentence to the Pope,

He, bringing his intelligence to bear 70

This last time on what ball behoves him
drop

In the urn, or white or black, does drop a
black,

Send five souls more to just precede his
own,

Stand him in stead and witness, if need
were,

How he is wont o do God's work on
earth.

The manner of his sitting out the dim
Droop of a sombre February day

In the plain closet where he does such
work,

With, from all Peter's treasury, one stool,
One table and one lathen crucifix. 80

There sits the Pope, his thoughts for com-
pany;

Grave but not sad, — nay, something like
a cheer

Leaves the lips free to be benevolent,

¹ Clavecinist: player on the harpsichord.

Which, all day long, did duty firm and fast.
 A cherishing there is of foot and knee,
 A chafing loose-skinned large-veined hand
 with hand, —
 What steward but knows when stewardship
 earns its wage,
 May levy praise, anticipate the lord?
 He reads, notes, lays the papers down at
 last,
 Muses, then takes a turn about the room;
 Unclasps a huge tome¹ in an antique
 guise,
 Primitive print and tongue half obsolete,
 That stands him in diurnal stead; opens
 page,
 Finds place where falls the passage to be
 conned
 According to an order long in use:
 And, as he comes upon the evening's
 chance,
 Starts somewhat, solemnises straight his
 smile,
 Then reads aloud that portion first to last,
 And at the end lets flow his own thoughts
 forth
 Likewise aloud, for respite and relief,
 Till by the dreary relics of the west
 Wan through the half-moon window, all
 his light,
 He bows the head while the lips move in
 prayer,
 Writes some three brief lines, signs and
 seals the same,
 Tinkles a hand-bell, bids the obsequious
 Sir
 Who puts foot presently o' the closet-sill
 He watched outside of, bear as super-
 scribed
 That mandate to the Governor forthwith:
 Then heaves abroad his cares in one good
 sigh;
 Traverses corridor with no arm's help,
 And so to sup as a clear conscience should.
 The manner of the judgment of the Pope.

Then must speak Guido yet a second time,
 Satan's old saw being apt here — skin
 for skin,
 All a man hath that will he give for life.
 While life was graspable and gainable,
 And bird-like buzzed her wings round
 Guido's brow,
 Not much truth stiffened out the web of
 words
 He wove to catch her: when away she
 flew
 And death came, death's breath rivelled
 up the lies,
 Left bare the metal thread, the fibre fine
 Of truth, i' the spinning: the true words
 shone last.

How Guido, to another purpose quite,
 Speaks and despairs, the last night of his
 life,
 In that New Prison by Castle Angelo
 At the bridge foot: the same man, another
 voice.
 On a stone bench in a close fetid cell,
 Where the hot vapour of an agony,
 Struck into drops on the cold wall, runs
 down
 Horrible worms made out of sweat and
 tears —
 There crouch, well nigh to the knees in
 dungeon-straw,
 Lit by the sole lamp suffered for their
 sake,
 Two awe-struck figures, this a Cardinal, 50
 That an Abate, both of old styled friends
 O' the thing part man part monster in the
 midst,
 So changed is Franceschini's gentle blood.
 The tiger-cat screams now, that whined be-
 fore,
 That pried and tried and trod so gingerly,
 Till in its silkiness the trap-teeth joined;
 Then you know how the bristling fury
 foams.
 They listen, this wrapped in his folds of
 red,
 While his feet fumble for the filth below;
 The other, as becoms a stouter heart, 60
 Working his best with beads and cross to
 ban
 The enemy that comes in like a flood
 Spite of the standard set up, verily
 And in no trope at all, against him there:
 For at the prison-gate, just a few steps
 Outside, already, in the doubtful dawn,
 Thither, from this side and from that,
 slow sweep
 And settle down in silence solidly,
 Crow-wise, the frightful Brotherhood of
 Death.
 Black-hatted and black-hooded huddle 70
 they,
 Black rosaries a-dangling from each waist;
 So take they their grim station at the door,
 Torches lit, skull-and-cross-bones-banner
 spread,
 And that gigantic Christ with open arms,
 Grounded. Nor lacks there aught but
 that the group
 Break forth, intone the lamentable psalm,
 "Out of the deeps, Lord, have I cried to
 thee!" —
 When inside, from the true profound, a
 sign
 Shall bear intelligence that the foe is foiled,
 Count Guido Franceschini has confessed, 80
 And is absolved and reconciled with God.
 Then they, intoning, may begin their
 march,
 Make by the longest way for the People's
 Square,

¹ A huge tome: the history of the Popes;
 see the opening of Book X.

Carry the criminal to his crime's award:
A mob to cleave, a scaffolding to reach,
Two gallows and Mannaia¹ crowning all.
How Guido made defence a second time.

Finally, even as thus by step and step
I led you from the level of to-day
Up to the summit of so long ago,
Here, whence I point you the wide prospect
round —

Let me, by like steps, slope you back to
smooth,

to Land you on mother-earth, no whit the
worse,

'To feed o' the fat o' the furrow: free t.
dwell,

Taste our time's better things profusely
spread

For all who love the level, corn and wine,
Much cattle and the many-folded fleece.
Shall not my friends go feast again on
sward,

Though cognisant of country in the
clouds

Higher than wistful eagle's horny eye
Ever unclosed for, 'mid ancestral crags,
When morning broke and Spring was
back once more,

20 And he died, heaven, save by his heart, un-
reached?

Yet heaven my fancy lifts to, ladder-like, —
As Jack reached, holpen of his beanstalk-
rungs!

A novel country: I might make it mine
By choosing which one aspect of the year
Suited mood best, and putting solely that
On panel somewhere in the House of
Fame,

Landscaping what I saved, not what I
saw:

— Might fix you, whether frost in goblin-
time

Startled the moon with his abrupt bright
laugh,

30 Or, August's hair afloat in filmy fire,
She fell, arms wide, face foremost on the
world,

Swooned there and so singed out the
strength of things.

Thus were abolished Spring and Autumn
both,

The land dwarfed to one likeness of the
land,

Life cramped corpse-fashion. Rather
learn and love

Each facet-flash of the revolving year! —
Red, green and blue that whirl into a
white,

The variance now, the eventual unity,
Which make the miracle. See it for your-
selves,

This man's act, changeable because alive! 41
Action now shrouds, now shows the in-
forming thought;

Man, like a glass ball with a spark a-top,
Out of the magic fire that lurks inside,
Shows one tint at a time to take the eye:
Which, let a finger touch the silent sleep,
Shifted a hair's-breadth shoots you dark
for bright,

Suffuses bright with dark, and baffles so
Your sentence absolute for shine or shade.
Once set such orbs, — white styled, black
stigmatised, —

A-rolling, see them once on the other side 56
Your good men and your bad men every
one

From Guido Franceschini to Guy Faux,
Oft would you rub your eyes and change
your names.

Such, British Public, ye who like me not,
(God love you!) — whom I yet have
laboured for,

Perchance more careful whoso runs may
read

Than erst when all, it seemed, could read
who ran, —

Perchance more careless whoso reads may
praise

Than late when he who praised and read
and wrote

Was apt to find himself the self-same me, — 6
Such labour had such issue, so I wrought
This arc, by furtherance of such alloy,

And so, by one spirt, take away its trace
Till, justifiably golden, rounds my ring.

A ring without a posy,² and that ring
mine?

O lyric Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire, —
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,

Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face, — 70

Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart —
When the first summons from the darkling
earth

Reached thee amid thy chambers,
blanched their blue,

And bared them of the glory — to drop
down,

To toil for man, to suffer or to die, —
This is the same voice: can thy soul know
change?

Hail then, and hearken from the realms of
help!

Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of
thee,

Except with bent head and beseeching 80
hand —

² Posy: a motto or rhyme, engraved inside
a ring.

¹ Mannaia: a kind of guillotine.

That still, despite the distance and the dark,
 What was, again may be; some interchange
 Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
 Some benediction anciently thy smile:
 — Never conclude, but raising hand and head
 Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
 Their utmost up and on, — so blessing back
 In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
 Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
 Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

II. — HALF-ROME.

WHAT, you, Sir, come too? (Just the man I'd meet.)
 Be ruled by me and have a care o' the crowd:
 This way, while fresh folk go and get their gaze:
 I'll tell you like a book and save your shins.
 Fie, what a roaring day we've had!
 Whose fault?
 Lorenzo in Lucina, — here's a church
 To hold a crowd at need, accommodate
 All comers from the Corso! If this crush
 Make not its priests ashamed of what they show
 For temple-room, don't prick them to draw purse
 And down with bricks and mortar, eke us out
 The beggarly transept with its bit of apse
 Into a decent space for Christian ease,
 Why, to-day's lucky pearl is cast to swine.
 Listen and estimate the luck they've had!
 (The right man, and I hold him.)
 Sir, do you see,
 They laid both bodies in the church, this morn
 The first thing, on the chancel two steps up,
 Behind the little marble balustrade;
 Disposed them, Pietro the old murdered fool
 To the right of the altar, and his wretched wife
 On the other side. In trying to count stabs,
 People supposed Violante showed the most,
 Till somebody explained us that mistake;
 His wounds had been dealt out indifferent where,
 But she took all her stabbings in the face,

Since punished thus solely for honour's sake,
Honoris causâ, that's the proper term.
 A delicacy there is, our gallants hold,
 When you avenge your honour and only then,
 That you disfigure the subject, fray the face,
 Not just take life and end, in clownish guise.
 It was Violante gave the first offence,
 Got therefore the conspicuous punishment:
 While Pietro, who helped merely, his mere death
 Answered the purpose, so his face went free.
 We fancied even, free as you please, that face
 Showed itself still intolerably wronged;
 Was wrinkled over with resentment yet,
 Nor calm at all, as murdered faces use,
 Once the worst ended: an indignant air
 O' the head there was — 'tis said the body turned
 Round and away, rolled from Violante's side
 Where they had laid it loving-husband-like.
 If so, if corpses can be sensitive,
 Why did not he roll right down altar-step,
 Roll on through nave, roll fairly out of church,
 Deprive Lorenzo of the spectacle,
 Pay back thus the succession of affronts
 Whereto this church had served as theatre?
 For see: at that same altar where he lies,
 To that same inch of step, was brought the babe
 For blessing after baptism, and there styled
 Pompilia, and a string of names beside,
 By his bad wife, some seventeen years ago,
 Who purchased her simply to palm on him,
 Flatter his dotage and defraud the heirs.
 Wait awhile! Also to this very step
 Did this Violante, twelve years afterward,
 Bring, the mock-mother, that child-cheat
 full-grown,
 Pompilia, in pursuance of her plot,
 And there brave God and man a second time
 By linking a new victim to the lie.
 There, having made a match unknown to him,
 She, still unknown to Pietro, tied the knot
 Which nothing cuts except this kind of knife;
 Yes, made her daughter, as the girl was held,
 Marry a man, and honest man beside,
 And man of birth to boot, — clandestinely
 Because of this, because of that, because
 O' the devil's will to work his worst for once, —

Confident she could top her part at need
And, when her husband must be told in
turn,
Ply the wife's trade, play off the sex's trick
And, alternating worry with quiet qualms,
Bravado with submissiveness, prettily fool
Her Pietro into patience: so it proved.
Ay, 'tis four years since man and wife they

grew,
This Guido Franceschini and this same
Pompilia, foolishly thought, falsely de-
clared

10 A Comparini and the couple's child:
Just at this altar where, beneath the piece
Of Master Guido Reni, Christ on cross,
Second to nought observable in Rome,
That couple lie now, murdered yestereve.
Even the blind can see a providence here.

From dawn till now that it is growing dusk
A multitude has flocked and filled the
church,
Coming and going, coming back again,
Till to count crazed one. Rome was at
the show.

20 People climbed up the columns, fought for
spikes

O' the chapel-rail to perch themselves upon,
Jumped over and so broke the wooden
work

Painted like porphyry to deceive the eye;
Serve the priests right! The organ-loft
was crammed,

Women were fainting, no few fights ensued,
In short, it was a show repaid your pains:
For, though their room was scant un-
doubtedly,

Yet they did manage matters, to be just,
A little at this Lorenzo. Body o' me!

30 I saw a body exposed once . . . never
mind!

Enough that here the bodies had their due.
No stinginess in wax, a row all round,
And one big taper at each head and foot.

So, people pushed their way, and took
their turn,

Saw, threw their eyes up, crossed them-
selves, gave place

To pressure from behind, since all the
world

Knew the old pair, could talk the tragedy
Over from first to last: Pompilia too,
Those who had known her — what 'twas
worth to them!

40 Guido's acquaintance was in less request;
The Count had lounged somewhat too
long in Rome,

Made himself cheap; with him were hand
and glove

Barbers and blear-eyed, as the ancient
sings.

¹ *The ancient*: Horace (*Sat. i. 7, 3*, "Omnibus et lippis notum et tonsoribus").

Also he is alive and like to be:
Had he considerably died, — aha!

He jostled Luca Cini on his staff,
Mute in the midst, the whole man one
amaze,
Staring amain and crossing brow and
breast.

"How now?" asked I. "'Tis seventy
years," quoth he,

"Since I first saw, holding my father's
hand,

"Bodies set forth: a many have I seen,
"Yet all was poor to this I live and see.

"Here the world's wickedness seals up the
sum:

"What with Molinos' doctrine and this
deed,

"Antichrist surely comes and doomsday's
near.

"May I depart in peace, I have seen my
sec."

"Depart then," I advised, "nor block the
road

"For youngsters still behindhand with
such sights!"

"Why no," rejoins the venerable sire,
"I know it's horrid, hideous past belief,

"Burdensome far beyond what eye can
bear;

"But they do promise, when Pompilia dies
"I' the course o' the day, — and she can't
outlive night, —

"They'll bring her body also to expose

"Beside the parents, one, two, three
a-breast;

"That were indeed a sight, which might
I see,

"I trust I should not last to see the like!"
Whereat I bade the senior spare his shanks,

Since doctors give her till to-night to live,
And tell us how the butchery happened. 70

"Ah,
"But you can't know!" sighs he, "I'll not
despair:

"Beside I'm useful at explaining things —
"As, how the dagger laid there at the feet,

"Caused the peculiar cuts; I mind its
make,

"Triangular i' the blade, a Genoese,
"Armed with those little hook-teeth on the
edge

"To open in the flesh nor shut again:
"I like to teach a novice: I shall stay!"

And stay he did, and stay be sure he will.

A personage came by the private door 80
At noon to have his look: I name no
names:

Well then, His Eminence the Cardinal,
Whose servitor in honourable sort

Guido was once, the same who made the
match,

(Will you have the truth?) whereof we see
effect.

No sooner whisper ran he was arrived
Than up pops Curate Carlo, a brisk lad,
Who never lets a good occasion slip,
And volunteers improving the event.
We looked he'd give the history's self some
help,

Treat us to how the wife's confession went
(This morning she confessed her crime, we
know)

And, may-be, throw in something of the
Priest —

If he's not ordered back, punished anew,
The gallant, Caponsacchi, Lucifer
I' the garden where Pompilia, Eve-like,
lured

Her Adam Guido to his fault and fall.
Think you we got a sprig of speech akin
To this from Carlo, with the Cardinal
there?

Too wary he was, too widely awake, I trow.
He did the murder in a dozen words;
Then said that all such outrages crop forth
I' the course of nature when Molinos' tares
Are sown for wheat, flourish and choke the
Church:

So slid on to the abominable sect
And the philosophic sin — we've heard all
that,

And the Cardinal too, (who book-made on
the same)

But, for the murder, left it where he found.
Oh but he's quick, the Curate, minds his
game!

And, after all, we have the main o' the fact:
Case could not well be simpler, — mapped,
as it were,

We follow the murder's maze from source
to sea,

By the red line, past mistake: one sees
indeed

Not only how all was and must have been,
But cannot other than be to the end of time.
Turn out here by the Ruspoli! Do you
hold

Guido was so prodigiously to blame?
A certain cousin of yours has told you so?
Exactly! Here's a friend shall set you
right,

Let him but have the handsel of your ear.

These wretched Comparini were once gay
And galliard, of the modest middle class:
Born in this quarter seventy years ago
And married young, they lived the accus-
tomed life,

Citizens as they were of good repute:
And, childless, naturally took their ease
With only their two selves to care about
And use the wealth for: wealthy is the word,
Since Pietro was possessed of house and
land —

And specially one house, when good days
smiled,

In Via Vittoria, the respectable street

Where he lived mainly: but another house
Of less pretension did he buy betimes,
The villa, meant for jaunts and jollity,
I' the Pauline district, to be private there — 50
Just what puts murder in an enemy's head.
Moreover, — here's the worm i' the core,
the germ

O' the rottenness and ruin which ar-
rived, —

He owned some usufruct, had moneys' use
Lifelong, but to determine with his life
In heirs' default: so, Pietro craved an heir,
(The story always old and always new)
Shut his fool's-eyes fast on the visible good
And wealth for certain, opened them owl-
wide

On fortune's sole piece of forgetfulness, 60
The child that should have been and would
not be.

Hence, seventeen years ago, conceive his
glee

When first Violante, 'twixt a smile and
blush,

With touch of agitation proper too,
Announced that, spite of her unpromising
age,

The miracle would in time be manifest,
An heir's birth was to happen: and it did.
Somehow or other, — how, all in good
time!

By a trick, a sleight of hand you are to
hear, —

A child was born, Pompilia, for his joy, 70
Plaything at once and prop, a fairy-gift,
A saints' grace or, say, grant of the good
God, —

A fiddle-pin's end! What imbeciles are
we!

Look now: if some one could have proph-
esied,

"For love of you, for liking to your wife,
"I undertake to crush a snake I spy

"Settling itself i' the soft of both your
breasts.

"Give me yon babe to strangle painlessly!
"She'll soar to the safe: you'll have your
crying out,

"Then sleep, then wake, then sleep, then 80
end your days

"In peace and plenty, mixed with mild
regret,

"Thirty years hence when Christmas takes
old folk" —

How had old Pietro sprung up, crossed
himself,

And kicked the conjurer! Whereas you
and I,

Being wise with after-wit, had clapped our
hands;

Nay, added, in the old fool's interest,
"Strangle the black-eyed babe, so far so
good,

"But on condition you relieve the man

"O' the wife and throttle him Violante too —

"She is the mischief!"

We had hit the mark.

She, whose trick brought the babe into the world,

She it was, when the babe was grown a girl,
Judged a new trick should reinforce the old,

Send vigour to the lie now somewhat spent
By twelve years' service; lest Eve's rule decline

Over this Adam of hers, whose cabbage-plot

Throve dubiously since turned fools'-paradise,

10 Spite of a nightingale on every stump.
Pietro's estate was dwindling day by day,
While he, rapt far above such mundane care,

Crawled all-fours with his baby pick-a-back,

Sat at serene cats'-cradle with his child,
Or took the measured tallness, top to toe,
Of what was grown a great girl twelve years old:

Till sudden at the door a tap discreet,
A visitor's premonitory cough,
And poverty had reached him in her rounds.

20 This came when he was past the working-time,

Had learned to dandle and forgot to dig,
And who must but Violante cast about,
Contrive and task that head of hers again?
She whd had caught one fish, could make that catch

A bigger still, in angler's policy:
So, with an angler's mercy for the bait,
Her minnow was set wriggling on its barb
And tossed to mid-stream; which means, this grown girl

With the great eyes and bounty of black hair

30 And first crisp youth that tempts a jaded taste,

Was whisked i' the way of a certain man,
who snapped.

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine¹
Was head of an old noble house enough,
Not over-rich, you can't have everything,
But such a man as riches rub against,
Readily stick to, — one with a right to them

Born in the blood: 'twas in his very brow
Always to knit itself against the world,
Beforehand so, when that world stinted due
40 Service and suit: the world ducks and defers.

¹ *Aretine*: native of Arezzo.

As such folks do, he had come up to Rome
To better his fortune, and, since many years,

Was friend and follower of a cardinal;
Waiting the rather thus on providence
That a shrewd younger poorer brother yet,
The Abate Paolo, a regular priest,
Had long since tried his powers and found he swam

With the deftest on the Galilean pool:
But then he was a web-foot, free o' the wave,

And no ambiguous dab-chick¹ atched to 50
strut,

Humbled by any fond attempt to swim
When fiercer fowl usurped his dunghill top —

A whole priest, Paolo, no mere piece of one

Like Guido tacked thus to the Church's tail!

Guido moreover, as the head o' the house,
Claiming the main prize, not the lesser luck,

The centre lily, no mere chickweed fringe.

He waited and learned waiting, thirty years;
Got promise, missed performance — what would you have?

No petty post rewards a nobleman 60
For spending youth in splendid lackey-work,

And there's concurrence for each rarer prize;

When that falls, rougher hand and readier foot

Push aside Guido spite of his black looks.
The end was, Guido, when the warning showed,

The first white hair i' the glass, gave up the game,

Determined on returning to his town,
Making the best of bad incurable,
Patching the old palace up and lingering there

The customary life out with his kin, 70
Where honour helps to spice the scanty bread.

Just as he trimmed his lamp and girt his loins

To go his journey and be wise at home,
In the right mood of disappointed worth,
Who but Violante sudden spied her prey
(Where was I with that angler-simile?)
And threw her bait, Pompilia, where he sulked —

A gleam i' the gloom!

What if he gained thus much,
Wrung out this sweet drop from the bitter Past,

Bore off this rose-bud from the prickly 84
brake

To justify such torn clothes and scratched hands,
And, after all, brought something back from Rome?

Would not a wife serve at Arezzo well
To light the dark house, lend a look of youth

To the mother's face grown meagre, left alone

And famished with the emptiness of hope,
Old Donna Beatrice? Wife you want
Would you play family-representative,
Carry you elder-brotherly, high and right
10 O'er what may prove the natural petulance
Of the third brother, younger, greedier still,
Girolamo, also a fledgeling priest,
Beginning life in turn with callow beak
Agape for luck, no luck had stopped and stilled.

Such were the pinks and greys about the bait

Persuaded Guido gulp down hook and all.

What constituted him so choice a catch,
You question? Past his prime and poor beside!

Ask that of any she who knows the trade.

20 Why first, here was a nobleman with friends,

A palace one might run to and be safe
When presently the threatened fate should fall,

A big-browed master to block door-way up,
Parley with people bent on pushing by
And praying the mild Pietro quick clear scores:

Is birth a privilege and power or no?
Also, — but judge of the result desired,
By the price paid and manner of the sale.
The Count was made woo, win and wed at once:

30 Asked, and was haled for answer, lest the heat

Should cool, to San Lorenzo, one blind eye,
And had Pompilia put into his arms
O' the sly there, by a hasty candle-blink,
With sanction of some priest-confederate
Properly paid to make short work and sure.

So did old Pietro's daughter change her style

For Guido Franceschini's lady-wife
Ere Guido knew it well; and why this haste
And scramble and indecent secrecy?

40 "Lest Pietro, all the while in ignorance,
"Should get to learn, gainsay and break the match:

"His peevishness had promptly put aside
"Such honour and refused the proffered boon,

"Pleased to become authoritative once.
"She remedied the wilful man's mistake —"

Did our discreet Violante. Rather say,

Thus did she, lest the object of her game,
Guido the gulled one, give him but a chance,

A moment's respite, time for thinking twice,

Might count the cost before he sold himself, 50

And try the clink of coin they paid him with.

But coin I aid, bargain struck and business done,

Once the clandestine marriage over thus,
All parties made perform the best o' the fact;

Pietro could play vast indignation off,
Be ignorant and astounded, dupe, poor soul,

Please you, of daughter, wife and son-in-law,

While Guido found himself in flagrant fault,

Must e'en do suit and service, soothe, subdue

A father not unreasonably chafed 60

Bring him to terms by paying son's devoir.
Pleasant initiation!

The end, this:

Guido's broad back was saddled to bear all —

Pietro, Violante, and Pompilia too, —
Three lots cast confidently in one lap,
Three dead-weights with one arm to lift the three

Out of their limbo up to life again.

The Roman household was to strike fresh root

In a new soil, graced with a novel name,
Gilt with an alien glory, Arcetina 70
Henceforth and never Roman any more,
By treaty and engagement; thus it ran:
Pompilia's dowry for Pompilia's self
As a thing of course, — she paid her own expense;

No loss nor gain there: but the couple, you see,

They, for their part, turned over first of all
Their fortune in its rags and rottenness
To Guido, fusion and confusion, he
And his with them and theirs, — whatever rag

With coin residuary fell on floor 80

When Brother Paolo's energetic shake
Should do the relics justice: since 'twas thought,

Once vulnerable Pietro out of reach,
That, left at Rome as representative,
The Abate, backed by a potent patron here,

And otherwise with purple flushing him,
Might play a good game with the creditor,
Make up a moiety which, great, or small,
Should go to the common stock — if any- 90
thing,

Guido's, so far repayment of the cost
About to be, — and if, as looked more like,
Nothing, — why, all the nobler cost were his
Who guaranteed, for better or for worse,
To Pietro and Violante, house and home,
Kith and kin, with the pick of company
And life o' the fat o' the land while life
should last.

How say you to the bargain at first blush?
Why did a middle-aged not-silly man
10 Show himself thus besotted all at once?
Quoth Solomon, one black eye does it all.

They went to Arezzo, — Pietro and his
spouse,
With just the dusk o' the day of life to
spend,

Eager to use the twilight, taste a treat,
Enjoy for once with neither stay nor stint
The luxury of lord-and-lady-ship,
And realise the stuff and nonsense long
A-simmer in their noddles; vent the fume
Born there and bred, the citizen's conceit
20 How fares nobility while crossing earth,
What rampart or invisible body-guard
Keeps off the taint of common life from
such.

They had not fed for nothing on the tales
Of grantees who give banquets worthy
Jove,
Spending gold as if Plutus paid a whim,
Served with obeisances as when . . . what
God?

I'm at the end of my tether; 'tis enough
You understand what they came primed to
see:

While Guido who should minister the sight,
30 Stay all this qualmish greediness of soul
With apples and with flagons — for his
part,

Was set on life diverse as pole from pole:
Lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, — what
else

Was he just now awake from, sick and sage,
After the very debauch they would begin? —
Suppose such stuff and nonsense really were.
That bubble, they were bent on blowing
big,

He had blown already till he burst his
cheeks,

And hence found soapsuds bitter to the
tongue.

40 He hoped now to walk softly all his days
In soberness of spirit, if haply so,
Pinching and paring he might furnish
forth

A frugal board, bare sustenance, no more,
Till times, that could not well grow worse,
should mend.

Thus minded then, two parties mean to
meet

And make each other happy. The first
week,

And fancy strikes fact and explodes in
full.

"This," shrieked the Comparini, "this the
Count,

"The palace, the signorial privilege,

"The pomp and pageantry were promised 51
us?

"For this have we exchanged our liberty,

"Our competence, our darling of a child?

"To house as spectres in a sepulchre

"Under this black stone-heap, the street's
disgrace,

"Grimmest as that is of the gruesome
town,

"And here pick garbage on a pewter plate

"Or cough at verjuice dripped from
earthenware?

"Oh Via Vittoria, oh the other place

"I' the Pauline, did we give you up for
this?

"Where's the foregone housekeeping good 61
and gay,

"The neighbourliness, the companion-
ship,

"The treat and feast when holidays came
round,

"The daily feast that seemed no treat at all,

"Called common by the uncommon fools
we were!

"Even the sun that used to shine at Rome,

"Where is it? Robbed and starved and
frozen too,

"We will have justice, justice if there be!"

Did not they shout, did not the town re-
sound!

Guido's old lady-mother Beatrice,
Who since her husband, Count Tommaso's 70
death,

Had held sole sway i' the house, — the
doited crone

Slow to acknowledge, curtesy and abdi-
cate, —

Was recognised of true novercal type,
Dragon and devil. His brother Girolamo
Came next in order: priest was he? The
worse!

No way of winning him to leave his mumps
And help the laugh against old ancestry
And formal habits long since out of date,
Letting his youth be patterned on the
mode

Approved of where Violante laid down law. 80

Or did he brighten up by way of change,

Dispose himself for affability?

The malapert, too complaisant by half

To the alarmed young novice of a bride!

Let him go buzz, betake himself elsewhere
Nor singe his fly-wings in the candle-flame!

Four months' probation of this purgatory,
Dog-snap and cat-claw, curse and counter-
blast,

The devil's self were sick of his own din;

And Pietro, after trumpeting huge wrongs 91

At church and market-place, pillar and post,
 Square's corner, street's end, now the palace-step
 And now the wine-house bench — while, on her side,
 Violante up and down was voluble
 In whatsoever pair of ears would perk
 From goody, gossip, cater-cousin and sib,
 Curious to peep at the inside of things
 And catch in the act pretentious poverty
 At its wits' end to keep appearance up,
 To Make both ends meet, — nothing the vulgar loves
 Like what this couple pitched them right and left.
 Then, their worst done that way, both struck tent, marched:
 — Renounced their share o' the bargain, flung what dues
 Guido was bound to pay, in Guido's face,
 Left their hearts'-darling, treasure of the twain
 And so forth, the poor inexperienced bride,
 To her own devices, bade Arezzo rot,
 Cursed life signorial, and sought Rome once more.

I see the comment ready on your lip,
 "The better fortune, Guido's — free at least
 "By this defection of the foolish pair,
 "He could begin make profit in some sort
 "Of the young bride and the new quietness,
 "Lead his own life now, henceforth breathe unplagued."
 Could he? You know the sex like Guido's self.
 Learn the Violante-nature!

Once in Rome,
 By way of helping Guido lead such life,
 Her first act to inaugurate return
 Was, she got pricked in conscience: Jubilee
 Gave her the hint. Our Pope, as kind as just,
 Attained his eighty years, announced a boon
 Should make us bless the fact, held Jubilee —
 Short shrift, prompt pardon for the light offence,
 And no rough dealing with the regular crime
 So this occasion were not suffered slip —
 Otherwise, sins commuted as before,
 Without the least abatement in the price.
 Now, who had thought it? All this while, it seems,
 Our sage Violante had a sin of a sort
 She must compound for now or not at all.
 Now be the ready riddance! She confessed

Pompilia was a fable not a fact:
 She never bore a child in her whole life.
 Had this child been a changeling, that were grace
 In some degree, exchange is hardly theft,
 You take your stand on truth ere leap your lie:
 Here was all lie, no touch of truth at all,
 All the lie hers — not even Pietro guessed
 He was as childless still as twelve years since.
 The babe had been a find i' the filth-heap, 54
 Sir,
 Catch from the kennel! There was found at Rome,
 Down in the deepest of our social dregs,
 A woman who professed the wanton's trade
 Under the requisite thin coverture,
Communis meretrix and washer-wife:
 The creature thus conditioned found by chance
 Motherhood like a jewel in the muck,
 And straightway either trafficked with her prize
 Or listened to the tempter and let be, —
 Made pact abolishing her place and part 60
 In womankind, beast-fellowship indeed.
 She sold this babe eight months before its birth
 To our Violante, Pietro's honest spouse,
 Well-famed and widely-instanced as that crown
 To the husband, virtue in a woman's shape.
 She it was, bought, paid for, passed off the thing
 As very flesh and blood and child of her
 Despite the flagrant fifty years, — and why?
 Partly to please old Pietro, fill his cup
 With wine at the late hour when lees are 70
 left,
 And send him from life's feast rejoicingly, —
 Partly to cheat the rightful heirs, agape,
 Each uncle's cousin's brother's son of him,
 For that same principal of the usufruct¹
 It vexed him he must die and leave behind.
 Such was the sin had come to be confessed.
 Which of the tales, the first or last, was true?
 Did she so sin once, or, confessing now,
 Sin for the first time? Either way you will.
 One sees a reason for the cheat: one sees 80
 A reason for a cheat in owning cheat
 Where no cheat had been. What of the revenge?
 What prompted the contrition all at once,
 Made the avowal easy, the shame slight?

¹ Principal of the usufruct: i.e., the principal sum, in which Pietro had only a life-interest or usufruct.

- Why, prove they but Pompilia not their
child,
No child, no dowry! this, supposed their
child,
Had claimed what this, shown alien to their
blood,
Claimed nowise: Guido's claim was
through his wife,
Null then and void with hers. The biter
bit,
Do you see! For such repayment of the
past,
One might conceive the penitential pair
Ready to bring their case before the courts,
Publish their infamy to all the world
10 And, arm in arm, go chuckling thence
content.
- Is this your view? 'Twas Guido's any-
how
And colourable: he came forward then,
Protested in his very bride's behalf
Against this lie and all it led to, least
Of all the loss o' the dowry; no! From
her
And him alike he would expunge the blot,
Erase the brand of such a bestial birth,
Participate in no hideous heritage
Gathered from the gutter to be garnered up
20 And glorified in a palace. Peter and Paul!
But that who likes may look upon the pair
Exposed in yonder church, and show his
skill
By saying which is eye and which is mouth
'Thro' those stabs thick and threefold, —
but for that —
A strong word on the liars and their lie
Might crave expression and obtain it, Sir!
— Though prematurely, since there's more
to come,
More that will shake your confidence in
things
Your cousin tells you, — may I be so bold?
- 30 This makes the first act of the farce, —
anon
The sombre element comes stealing in
Till all is black or blood-red in the piece.
Guido, thus made a laughing-stock abroad,
A proverb for the market-place at home,
Left alone with Pompilia now, this graft
So reputable on his ancient stock,
This plague-seed set to fester his sound
flesh,
What does the Count? Revenge him on
his wife?
Unfasten at all risks to rid himself
40 The noisome lazar-badge, fall foul of fate,
And, careless whether the poor rag was
'ware
O' the part it played, or helped unwittingly,
Bid it go burn and leave his frayed flesh
free?
Plainly, did Guido open both doors wide,
- Spurn thence the cur-cast creature and
clear scores
As man might, tempted in extreme like
this?
No, birth and breeding, and compassion
too
Saved her such scandal. She was young,
he thought,
Not privy to the treason, punished most
I' the proclamation of it; why make her 50
A party to the crime she suffered by?
Then the black eyes were now her very
own,
Not any more Violante's: let her live,
Lose in a new air, under a new sun,
The taint of the imputed parentage
Truly or falsely, take no more the touch
Of Pietro and his partner anyhow!
All might go well yet.
- So she thought, herself,
It seems, since what was her first act and
deed
When news came how these kindly ones at 60
Rome
Had stripped her naked to amuse the
world
With spots here, spots there and spots
everywhere?
— For I should tell you that they noised
abroad
Not merely the main scandal of her birth
But slanders written, printed, published
wide,
Pamphlets which set forth all the pleas-
antry
Of how the promised glory was a dream,
The power a bubble, and the wealth —
why, dust.
There was a picture, painted to the life,
Of those rare doings, that superlative 70
Initiation in magnificence
Conferred on a poor Roman family
By favour of Arezzo and her first
And famousest, the Franceschini there.
You had the Countship holding head aloft
Bravely although bespattered, shifts and
straits
In keeping out o' the way o' the wheels o'
the world,
The comic of those home-contrivances
When the old lady-mother's wit was taxed
To find six clamorous mouths in food more 80
real
Than fruit plucked off the cobwebbed
family-tree,
Or acorns shed from its gilt mouldered
frame —
Cold glories served up with stale fame for
saUCE.
What, I ask, — when the drunkenness of
hate
Hiccapped return for hospitality,
Befouled the table they had feasted on,

Or say, — God knows I'll not prejudice
 the case, —
 Grievances thus distorted, magnified,
 Coloured by quarrel into calumny, —
 What side did our Pompilia first espouse?
 Her first deliberate measure was — she
 wrote,
 Pricked by some loyal impulse, straight to
 Rome
 And her husband's brother the Abate there,
 Who, having managed to effect the match,
 Might take men's censure for its ill success.
 She made a clean breast also in her turn,
 And qualified the couple properly,
 Since whose departure, hell, she said, was
 heaven,
 And the house, late distracted by their
 peals,
 Quiet as Carmel where the lilies live.
 Herself had oftentimes complained: but
 why?
 All her complaints had been their prompt-
 ing, tales
 Trumped up, devices to this very end.
 Their game had been to thwart her hus-
 band's love
 And cross his will, malign his words and
 ways,
 To reach this issue, furnish this pretence
 For impudent withdrawal from their
 bond, —
 Theft, indeed murder, since they meant no
 less
 Whose last injunction to her simple self
 Had been — what parents' precept do you
 think?
 That she should follow after with all speed.
 Fly from her husband's house clandestinely,
 Join them at Rome again, but first of all
 Pick up a fresh companion in her flight,
 So putting youth and beauty to fit use, —
 Some gay dare-devil cloak-and-rapier
 spark
 Capable of adventure, — helped by whom
 She, some fine eve when lutes were in the
 air,
 Having put poison in the posset-cup,
 Laid hands on money, jewels and the like,
 And, to conceal the thing with more effect,
 By way of parting benediction too,
 Fired the house, — one would finish fa-
 mously
 I' the tumult, slip out, scurry off and away
 And turn up merrily at home once more.
 Fact this, and not a dream o' the devil,
 Sir!
 And more than this, a fact none dare dis-
 pute,
 Word for word, such a letter did she write,
 And such the Abate read, nor simply read
 But gave all Rome to ruminate upon,
 In answer to such charges as, I say,
 The couple sought to be beforehand with.

The cause thus carried to the courts at
 Rome,
 Guido away, the Abate had no choice
 But stand forth, take his absent brother's
 part,
 Defend the honour of himself beside. 50
 He made what head he might against the
 pair,
 Maintained Pompilia's birth legitimate
 And all her rights intact — hers, Guido's
 now:
 And so far by his policy turned their flank,
 (The enemy being beforehand in the
 place)
 That, — though the courts allowed the
 cheat for fact,
 Suffered Violante to parade her shame,
 Publish her infamy to heart's content,
 And let the tale o' the feigned birth pass
 for proved, —
 Yet they stopped there, refused to inter- 60
 vene
 And dispossess the innocents, befooled
 By gifts o' the guilty, at guilt's new caprice.
 They would not take away the dowry now
 Wrongfully given at first, nor bar at all
 Succession to the aforesaid usufruct,
 Established on a fraud, nor play the game
 Of Pietro's child and now not Pietro's
 child
 As it might suit the gamester's purpose.
 Thus
 Was justice ever ridiculed in Rome:
 Such be the double verdicts favoured here 70
 Which send away both parties to a suit
 Nor puffed up nor cast down, — for each a
 crumb
 Of right, for neither of them the whole loaf.
 Whence, on the Comparini's part, appeal—
 Counter-appeal on Guido's, — that's the
 game:
 And so the matter stands, even to this hour,
 Bandied as balls are in a tennis-court,
 And so might stand, unless some heart
 broke first,
 Till doomsday.

Leave it thus, and now revert 80
 To the old Arezzo whence we moved to
 Rome.
 We've had enough o' the parents, false or
 true,
 Now for a touch o' the daughter's quality.
 The start's fair henceforth, every obstacle
 Out of the young wife's footpath, she's
 alone,
 Left to walk warily now: how does she
 walk?
 Why, once a dwelling's threshold marked
 in and crossed
 In rubric by the enemy on his rounds
 As eligible, as fit place of prey,
 Baffle him henceforth, keep him out who 90
 can!

Stop up the door at the first hint of hoof,
Presently at the window taps a horn,
And Satan's by your fireside, never
fear!

Pompilia, left alone now, found herself;
Found herself young too, sprightly, fair
enough,

Matched with a husband old beyond his
age

(Though that was something like four times
her own)

Because of cares past, present and to
come:

Found too the house dull and its inmates
dead,

10 So, looked outside for light and life.

And love
Did in a trice turn up with life and light, —
The man with the aureole, sympathy
made flesh,

The all-consoling Caponsacchi, Sir!

A priest — what else should the consoler
be?

With goodly shoulderblade and proper leg,
A portly make and a symmetric shape,
And curls that clustered to the tonsure
quite.

This was a bishop in the bud, and now
A canon full-blown so far: priest, and
priest

20 Nowise exorbitantly overworked,
The courtly Christian, not so much Saint
Paul

As a saint of Cæsar's household: there
posed he

Sending his god-glance after his shot
shaft,

Apollo's turned Apollo, while the snake
Pompilia writhed transfixed through all
her spires.

He, not a visitor at Guido's house,
Scarce an acquaintance, but in prime re-
quest

With the magnates of Arezzo, was seen
here,

Heard there, felt everywhere in Guido's
path

30 If Guido's wife's path be her husband's
too.

Now he threw comfits at the theatre
Into her lap, — what harm in Carnival?
Now he pressed close till his foot touched
her gown,

His hand brushed hers, — how help on
promenade?

And, ever on weighty business, found his
steps

Incline to a certain haunt of doubtful
fame

Which fronted Guido's palace by mere
chance;

While — how do accidents sometimes com-
bine! —

Pompilia chose to cloister up her charms

Just in a chamber that o'erlooked the
street,

Sat there to pray, or peep thence at man-
kind.

This passage of arms and wits amused the
town.

At last the husband lifted eyebrow, — bent
On day-book and the study how to wring
Half the due vintage from the worn-out
vines

At the villa, tease a quarter the old rent
From the farmstead, tenants swore would
tumble soon, —

Pricked up his ear a-singing day and night
With "ruin, ruin;" — and so surprised at
last —

Why, what else but a titter? Up he
jumps.

Back to mind come those scratchings at
the grange,

Prints of the paw about the outhouse;
rife

In his head at once again are word and
wink,

Mum here and *budget*¹ there, the smell o'
the fox,

The musk o' the gallant. "Friends,
there's falseness here!"

The proper help of friends in such a strait
Is waggery, the world over. Laugh him
free

O' the regular jealous-fit that's incident
To all old husbands that wed brisk young
wives,

And he'll go duly docile all his days. 60

"Somebody courts your wife, Count?
Where and when?"

"How and why? Mere horn-madness:
have a care!"

"Your lady loves her own room, sticks
to it,

"Locks herself in for hours, you say your-
self.

"And — what, it's Caponsacchi means
you harm?"

"The Canon? We caress him, he's the
world's,

"A man of such acceptance — never
dream,

"Though he were fifty times the fox you
fear,

"He'd risk his brush for your particular
chick,

"When the wide town's his hen-roost! 7
Fie o' the fool!"

So they dispensed their comfort of a kind.
Guido at last cried, "Something is in the
air,

"Under the earth, some plot against my
peace.

¹ *Mum, budget*: see Shakespeare, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. ii. 7.

"The trouble of eclipse hangs overhead;
 "How it should come of that officious orb
 "Your Canon in my system, you must say:
 "I say — that from the pressure of this
 spring
 "Began the chime and interchange of
 bells,
 "Ever one whisper, and one whisper more,
 "And just one whisper for the silvery last,
 "Till all at once a-row the bronze-throats
 burst
 "Into a larum both significant
 "And sinister: stop it I must and will.
 "Let Caponsacchi take his hand away
 "From the wire! — disport himself in
 other paths
 "Than lead precisely to my palace-gate, —
 "Look where he likes except one window's
 way
 "Where, cheek on hand, and elbow set
 on sill,
 "Happens to lean and say her litanies
 "Every day and all day long, just my wife —
 "Or wife and Caponsacchi may fare the
 worse!"
 Admire the man's simplicity, "I'll do this,
 "I'll not have that, I'll punish and pre-
 vent!" —
 'Tis easy saying. But to a fray, you see,
 Two parties go. The badger shows his
 teeth:
 The fox nor lies down sheep-like nor dares
 fight.
 Oh, the wife knew the appropriate warfare
 well,
 The way to put suspicion to the blush!
 At first hint of remonstrance, up and out
 I' the face of the world, you found her:
 she could speak,
 State her case, — Franceschini was a name,
 Guido had his full share of foes and
 friends —
 Why should not she call these to arbitrate?
 She bade the Governor do governance,
 Cried out on the Archbishop, — why,
 there now,
 Take him for sample! Three successive
 times,
 Had he to reconduct her by main-force
 From where she took her station opposite
 His shut door, — on the public steps
 thereto,
 Wringing her hands, when he came out to
 sec,
 And shrieking all her wrongs forth at his
 foot, —
 Back to the husband and the house she
 fled:
 Judge if that husband warmed him in the
 face
 Of friends or frowned on foes as hereto-
 fore!
 Judge if he missed the natural grin of folk,

Or lacked the customary compliment
 Of cap and bells, the luckless husband's fit!
 So it went on and on till — who was right?
 One merry April morning, Guido woke
 After the cuckoo, so late, near noonday,
 With an inordinate yawning of the jaws,
 Ears plugged, eyes gummed together, pal-
 ate, tongue
 And teeth one mud-paste made of poppy- 54
 milk;
 And found his wife flown, his scritoire the
 worse
 For a rummage, — jewelry that was, was
 not,
 Some money there had made itself wings
 too, —
 The door lay wide and yet the servants
 slept
 Sound as the dead, or dosed which does
 as well.
 In short, Pompilia, she who, candid soul,
 Had not so much as spoken all her life
 To the Canon, nay, so much as peeped at
 him
 Between her fingers while she prayed in
 church, —
 This lamb-like innocent of fifteen years 60
 (Such she was grown to by this time of day)
 Had simply put an opiate in the drink
 Of the whole household overnight, and
 then
 Got up and gone about her work secure,
 Laid hand on this waif and the other
 stray,
 Spoiled the Philistine and marched out of
 doors
 In company of the Canon who, Lord's
 love,
 What with his daily duty at the church,
 Nightly devoir where ladies congregate,
 Had something else to mind, assure your- 70
 self,
 Beside Pompilia, paragon though she be,
 Or notice if her nose were sharp or blunt!
 Well, anyhow, albeit impossible,
 Both of them were together jollily
 Jaunting it Rome-ward, half-way there by
 this,
 While Guido was left go and get undrugged,
 Gather his wits up, groaningly give thanks
 When neighbours crowded round him to
 condole.
 "Ah," quoth a gossip, "well I mind me
 now,
 "The Count did always say he thought he 80
 felt
 "He feared as if this very chance might
 fall!
 "And when a man of fifty finds his corns
 "Ache and his joints throb, and foresees a
 storm,
 "Though neighbours laugh and say the sky
 is clear,

- "Let us henceforth believe him weather-wise!"
- Then was the story told, I'll cut you short:
All neighbours knew: no mystery in the world.
- The lovers left at nightfall — over night
Had Caponsacchi come to carry off
Pompilia, — not alone, a friend of his,
One Guillichini, the more conversant
With Guido's housekeeping that he was just
A cousin of Guido's and might play a
prank —
- 10 (Have not you too a cousin that's a wag?)
— Lord and a Canon also, — what would
you have?
Such are the red-clothed milk-swollen
poppy-heads
That stand and stiffen 'mid the wheat o'
the Church! —
- This worthy came to aid, abet his best.
And so the house was ransacked, booty
bagged,
The lady led downstairs and out of doors
Guided and guarded till, the city passed,
A carriage lay convenient at the gate.
Good bye to the friendly Canon; the loving
one
- 20 Could peradventure do the rest himself.
In jumps Pompilia, after her the priest,
"Whip, driver! Money makes the mar
to go,
"And we've a bagful. Take the Roman
road!"
So said the neighbours. This was eight
hours since.
- Guido heard all, swore the befitting oaths,
Shook off the relics of his poison-drench,
Got horse, was fairly started in pursuit
With never a friend to follow, found the
track
Fast enough, 'twas the straight Perugia
way,
- 30 Trod soon upon their very heels, too late
By a minute only at Camoscia, reached
Chiusi, Foligno, ever the fugitives
Just ahead, just out as he galloped in,
Getting the good news ever fresh and
fresh,
Till, lo, at the last stage of all, last post
Before Rome, — as we say, in sight of
Rome
And safety (there's impunity at Rome
For priests, you know) at — what's the
little place? —
What some call Castelnuevo, some just
call
- 40 The Osteria, because o' the post-house inn,
There, at the journey's all but end, it seems,
Triumph deceived them and undid them
both,
Secure they might foretaste felicity
Nor fear surprisal: so, they were surprised.
- There did they halt at early evening, there
Did Guido overtake them: 'twas day-
break;
He came in time enough, not time too
much,
Since in the courtyard stood the Canon's
self
Urging the drowsy stable-grooms to haste
Harness the horses, have the journey end, 54
The trifling four-hours'-running, so reach
Rome.
And the other runaway, the wife? Up-
stairs,
Still on the couch where she had spent the
night,
One couch in one room, and one room for
both.
So gained they six hours, so were lost
thereby.
- Sir, what's the sequel? Lover and beloved
Fall on their knees? No impudence serves
here?
They beat their breasts and beg for easy
death,
Confess this, that and the other? — any-
how
Confess there wanted not some likelihood 60
To the supposition so preposterous,
That, O Pompilia, thy sequestered eyes
Had noticed, straying o'er the prayer-
book's edge,
More of the Canon than that black his coat,
Buckled his shoes were, broad his hat of
brim:
And that, O Canon, thy religious care
Had breathed too soft a *benedicite*
To banish trouble from a lady's breast
So lonely and so lovely, nor so lean!
This you expect? Indeed, then, much 70
you err.
Not to such ordinary end as this
Had Caponsacchi flung the cassock far,
Doffed the priest, donned the perfect cav-
alier.
The die was cast: over shoes over boots:
And just as she, I presently shall show,
Pompilia, soon looked Helen to the life,
Reclumbent upstairs in her pink and white,
So, in the inn-yard, bold as 'twere Troy-
town,
There strutted Paris in correct costume,
Cloak, cap and feather, no appointment 80
missed,
Even to a wicked-looking sword at side,
He seemed to find and feel familiar at.
Nor wanted words as ready and as big
As the part he played, the bold abashless
one.
"I interposed to save your wife from death,
"Yourself from shame, the true and only
shame:
"Ask your own conscience else! — or,
failing that,

- "What I have done I answer, anywhere,
 "Here, if you will; you see I have a sword:
 "Or, since I have a tonsure as you taunt,
 "At Rome, by all means, — priests to try
 a priest.
 "Only, speak where your wife's voice can
 reply!"
 And then he fingered at the sword again.
 So, Guido called, in aid and witness both.
 The Public Force. The Commissary
 came,
 Officers also; they secured the priest;
 Then, for his more confusion, mounted up
 With him, a guard on either side, the stair.
 To the bed-room where still slept or feigned
 a sleep
 His paramour and Guido's wife: in burst
 The company and bade her wake and rise.
 Her defence? This. She woke, saw,
 sprang upright
 I' the midst and stood as terrible as truth,
 Sprang to her husband's side, caught at the
 sword
 That hung there useless, — since they held
 each hand
 O' the lover, had disarmed him properly, —
 And in a moment out flew the bright thing
 Full in the face of Guido: but for help
 O' the guards who held her back and
 pinioned her
 With pains enough, she had finished you
 my tale
 With a flourish of red all round it, pinked
 her man
 Prettily; but she fought them one to six.
 They stopped that, — but her tongue con-
 tinued free:
 She spat forth such invective at her spouse,
 O'erfrothed him with such foam of mur-
 derer,
 Thief, pandar — that the popular tide
 soon turned,
 The favour of the very *sbirri*, straight
 Ebb'd from the husband, set toward his
 wife,
 People cried! "Hands off, pay a priest re-
 spect!"
 And "persecuting fiend" and "martyred
 saint"
 Began to lead a measure from lip to lip.
 But facts are facts and flinch not; stub-
 born things,
 And the question, "Prithee, friend, how
 comes my purse
 "I' the poke of you?" — admits of no
 reply.
 Here was a priest found out in masquerade,
 A wife caught playing truant if no more;
 While the Count, mortified in mien enough,
 And, nose to face, an added palm in length,
 Was plain writ "husband" every piece of
 him:
- Capture once made, release could hardly be.
 Beside, the prisoners both made appeal,
 "Take us to Rome!"
 Taken to Rome they were;
 The husband trooping after, piteously,
 Tail between legs, no talk of triumph
 now —
 No honour set firm on its feet once more
 On two dead bodies of the guilty, — nay,
 No dubious salve to honour's broken pate
 From chance that, after all, the hurt might
 seem
 A skin-deep matter, scratch that leaves no
 scar:
 For Guido's first search, — ferreting, poor
 soul,
 Here, there and everywhere in the vile
 place
 Abandoned to him when their backs were
 turned,
 Found, — furnishing a last and best
 regale, —
 All the love-letters bandied 'twixt the pair
 Since the first timid trembling into life
 O' the love-star till its stand at fiery full.
 Mad prose, mad verse, fears, hopes,
 triumph, despair,
 Avowal, disclaimer, plans, dates, names, —
 was nought
 Wanting to prove, if proof consoles at all,
 That this had been but the fifth act o' the
 piece
 Whereof the due proemium, months ago
 These playwrights had put forth, and ever
 since
 Matured the middle, added 'neath his nose.
 He might go cross himself: the case was
 clear.
 Therefore to Rome with the clear case;
 there plead
 Each party its best, and leave law do each
 right,
 Let law shine forth and show, as God in
 heaven,
 Vice prostrate, virtue pedestalled at last,
 The triumph of truth! What else shall
 glad our gaze
 When once authority has knit the brow
 And set the brain behind it to decide
 Between the wolf and sheep turned liti-
 gants?
 "This is indeed a business!" law shook
 head:
 "A husband charges hard things on a wife,
 "The wife as hard o' the husband: whose
 fault here?
 "A wife that flies her husband's house,
 does wrong:
 "The male friend's interference looks
 amiss,
 "Lends a suspicion: but suppose the wife,
 "On the other hand, be jeopardised at
 home —

- "Nay, that she simply hold, ill-groundedly,
 "An apprehension she is jeopardised, —
 "And further, if the friend partake the fear,
 "And, in a commendable charity
 "Which trusteth all, trust her that she mis-
 trusts, —
 "What do they but obey law — natural
 law?
 "Pretence may this be and a cloak for sin,
 "And circumstances that concur i' the close
 "Hint as much, loudly — yet scarce loud
 enough
 10 "To drown the answer 'strange may yet
 be true:'
 "Innocence often looks like guiltiness.
 "The accused declare that in thought,
 word and deed,
 "Innocent were they both from first to last
 "As male-babe haply laid by female-babe
 "At church on edge of the baptismal font
 "Together for a minute, perfect-pure.
 "Difficult to believe, yet possible,
 "As witness Joseph, the friend's patron-
 saint.
 "The night at the inn — there charity
 nigh chokes
 20 "Ere swallow what they both asseverate;
 "Though down the gullet faith may feel it
 go,
 "When mindful of what flight fatigued the
 flesh
 "Out of its faculty and fleshliness,
 "Subdued it to the soul, as saints assure:
 "So long a flight necessitates a fall
 "On the first bed, though in a lion's den,
 "And the first pillow, though the lion's
 back:
 "Difficult to believe, get possible.
 "Last come the letters' bundled beastli-
 ness —
 30 "Authority repugns give glance to — nay,
 "Turns head, and almost lets her whip-
 lash fall;
 "Yet here a voice cries 'Respite!' from
 the clouds —
 "The accused, both in a tale, protest, dis-
 claim,
 "Abominate the horror: 'Not my hand'
 "Asserts the friend — 'Nor mine' chimes
 in the wife,
 "Seeing I have no hand, nor write at all,
 "Illiterate — for she goes on to ask,
 "What if the friend did pen now verse
 now prose,
 "Commend it to her notice now and then?
 40 "Twas pearls to swine: she read no more
 than wrote,
 "And kept no more than read, for as they
 fell
 "She ever brushed the burr-like things
 away,
 "Or, better, burned them, quenched the
 fire in smoke.
 "As for this fardel, filth and foolishness,
- "She sees it now the first time: burn it
 too!
 "While for his part the friend vows igno-
 rance
 "Alike of what bears his name and bears
 hers:
 "Tis forgery, a felon's masterpiece,
 "And, as 'tis said the fox still finds the
 stench,
 "Home-manufacture and the husband's
 work.
 "Though he confesses, the ingenuous
 friend,
 "That certain missives, letters of a sort,
 "Flighty and feeble, which assigned them-
 selves
 "To the wife, no less have fallen, far too
 oft,
 "In his path: wherefrom he understood
 just this —
 "That were they verily the lady's own,
 "Why, she who penned them, since he
 never saw
 "Save for one minute the mere face of her,
 "Since never had there been the inter-
 change
 "Of word with word between them all 60
 their life,
 "Why, she must be the fondest of the frail,
 "And fit, she for the '*apage*'¹ he flung,
 "Her letters for the flame they went to feed!
 "But, now he sees her face and hears her
 speech,
 "Much he repents him if, in fancy-freak
 "For a moment the minutest measurable,
 "He coupled her with the first flimsy word
 "O' the self-spun fabric some mean spider-
 soul
 "Furnished forth: stop his films and
 stamp on him!
 "Never was such a tangled knottiness, 70
 "But thus authority cuts the Gordian
 through,
 "And mark how her decision suits the need!
 "Here's troublesomeness, scandal on both
 sides,
 "Plenty of fault to find, no absolute crime:
 "Let each side own its fault and make
 amends!
 "What does a priest in cavalier's attire
 "Consorting publicly with vagrant wives
 "In quarters close as the confessional,
 "Though innocent of harm? 'Tis harm
 enough:
 "Let him pay it, — say, be relegate a good 80
 "Three years, to spend in some place not
 too far
 "Nor yet too near, midway 'twixt near and
 far,
 "Rome and Arezzo, — Civita we choose,
 "Where he may lounge away time, live at
 large,

* *Apage*: "away with thee!"

' I, the poor sinner, fear I should have left
 "Sir Priest no nose-tip to turn up at me!"
 You, Sir, who listen but interpose no word,
 Ask yourself, had you borne a baiting thus?
 Was it enough to make a wise man mad?
 Oh, but I'll have your verdict at the end!

Well, not enough, it seems: such mere hurt
 falls,

Frets awhile, aches long, then grows less
 and less,

And so gets done with. Such was not the
 scheme

10 O' the pleasant Comparini: on Guido's
 wound

Ever in due succession, drop by drop,
 Came slow distilment from the alembic
 here

Set on to simmer by Canidian¹ hate,
 Corrosives keeping the man's misery raw.
 First fire-drop, — when he thought to
 make the best

O' the bad, to wring from out the sentence
 passed,

Poor, pitiful, absurd although it were,
 Yet what might eke him out result enough
 And make it worth while to have had the
 right

20 And not the wrong i' the matter judged at
 Rome.

Inadequate her punishment, no less
 Punished in some slight sort his wife had
 been;

Then, punished for adultery, what else?

On such admitted crime he thought to seize,
 And institute procedure in the courts

Which cut corruption of this kind from
 man,

Cast loose a wife proved loose and casta-
 way:

He claimed in due form a divorce at least.

This claim was met now by a counter claim

30 Pompilia sought divorce from bed and
 board

Of Guido, whose outrageous cruelty.

Whose mother's malice and whose brother's
 hate

Were just the white o' the charge, such
 dreadful depths

Blackened its centre, — hints of worse than
 hate,

Love from that brother, by that Guido's
 guile,

That mother's prompting. Such reply
 was made,

So was the engine loaded, wound up,
 sprung

On Guido, who received bolt full in breast;
 But no less bore up, giddily perhaps.

40 He had the Abate Paolo still in Rome,

Brother and friend and fighter on his side:
 They rallied in a measure, met the foe
 Manlike, joined battle in the public courts,
 As if to shame supine law from her sloth:
 And waiting her award, let beat the while
 Arezzo's banter, Rome's buffoonery,
 On this ear and on that ear, deaf alike,
 Safe from worse outrage. Let a scorpion
 nip,

And never mind till he contorts his tail!
 But there was sting i' the creature; thus it
 struck.

Guido had thought in his simplicity —
 That lying declaration of remorse,
 That story of the child which was no child
 And motherhood no motherhood at all,
 — That even this sin might have its sort of
 good

Inasmuch as no question more could be, —
 Call it false, call the story true, — no claim
 Of further parentage pretended now:

The parents had abjured all right, at
 least,

I' the woman owned his wife: to plead
 right still

Were to declare the abjuration false:

He was relieved from an⁷ fear henceforth
 Their hands might touch, their breath

defile again
 Pompilia with his name upon her yet.

Well, no: the next news was, Pompilia's
 health

Demanded change after full three long
 weeks

Spent in devotion with the Sisterhood, —
 Which rendered sojourn, — so the court

opined, —
 Too irksome, since the convent's walls

were high
 And windows narrow, nor was air enough

7 Nor light enough, but all looked prison-
 like,

The last thing which had come in the
 court's head.

Propose a new expedient therefore, —
 this!

She had demanded — had obtained indeed,
 By intervention of her pitying friends

Or perhaps lovers — (beauty in distress,
 Beauty whose tale is the town-talk beside,

Never lacks friendship's arm about her
 neck) —

Obtained remission of the penalty.
 Permitted transfer to some private place

8 Where better air, more light, new food
 might soothe —

Incarcerated (call it, all the same)
 At some sure friend's house she must keep

inside,
 Be found in at requirement fast enough, —
Domus pro carcere, in Roman style.

You keep the house i' the main, as most
 men do

And all good women: but free otherwise,

¹ *Canidian*: from Canidia, described by
 Horace as a malicious witch.

Should friends arrive, to lodge them and what not?

And such a *domum*, such a dwelling-place,
Having all Rome to choose from, where chose she?

What house obtained Pompilia's preference?

Why, just the Comparini's — just, do you mark,

Theirs who renounced all part and lot in her

So long as Guido could be robbed thereby,
And only fell back on relationship

And found their daughter safe and sound again

o When that might surelier stab him: yes, the pair

Who, as I told you, first had baited hook
With this poor gilded fly Pompilia-thing,
Then caught the fish, pulled Guido to the shore

And gutted him, — now found a further use

For the bait, would trail the gauze wings yet again

I' the way of what new swimmer passed their stand.

They took Pompilia to their hiding-place —
Not in the heart of Rome as formerly,

Under observance, subject to control —
20 But out o' the way, — or in the way, who knows?

That blind mute villa lurking by the gate
At Via Paullina, not so hard to miss

By the honest eye, easy enough to find
In twilight by marauders: where perchance

Some muffled Caponsacchi might repair,
Employ odd moments when he too tried change,

Found that a friend's abode was pleasanter
Than relegation, penance and the rest.

Come, here's the last drop does its worst to wound:

30 Here's Guido poisoned to the bone, you say,

Your boasted still's full strain and strength not so!

One master-squeeze from screw shall bring to birth

The hoard i' the heart o' the toad, hell's quintessence.

He learned the true convenience of the change,

And why a convent lacks the cheerful hearts

And helpful hands which female straits require,

When, in the blind mute villa by the gate,
Pompilia — what? sang, danced, saw company?

— Gave birth, Sir, to a child, his son and heir,

40 Or Guido's heir and Caponsacchi's son.

I want your word now: what do you say to this?

What would say little Arezzo and great Rome,

And what did God say and the devil say
One at each ear o' the man, the husband,

now
The father? Why, the overburdened mind

Broke down, what was a brain became a blaze.

In fury of the moment — (that first news
Fell on the Count among his vines, it seems,

Doing his farm-work,) — why, he summoned steward,

Called in the first four hard hands and 50 stout hearts

From field and furrow, poured forth his appeal,

Not to Rome's law and gospel any more,

But this clown with a mother or a wife,
That clodpole with a sister or a son:

And, whereas law and gospel held their peace,

What wonder if the sticks and stones cried out?

All five soon somehow found themselves at Rome,

At the villa door: there was the warmth and light —

The sense of life so just an inch inside —
Some angel must have whispered "One 60 more chance!"

He gave it: bade the others stand aside:
Knocked at the door, — "Who is it

knocks?" cried one.

"I will make," surely Guido's angel urged,

"One final essay, last experiment,
"Speak the word, name the name from out

all names

"Which, if, — as doubtless strong illusions are,

"And strange disguisings whereby truth seems false,

"And, since I am but man, I dare not do
"God's work until assured I see with

God, —

"If I should bring my lips to breathe that 70 name

"And they be innocent, — nay, by one mere touch

"Of innocence redeemed from utter guilt, —

"That name will bar the door and bid fate pass.

"I will not say 'It is a messenger,
"A neighbour, even a belated man,

"Much less your husband's friend, your husband's self."

"At such appeal the door is bound to ope.

"But I will say" — here's rhetoric and to spare!

Why, Sir, the stumbling-block is cursed and kicked,

Block though it be; the name that brought offence

Will bring offence: the burnt child dreads the fire

Although that fire feed on some taper-wick Which never left the altar nor singed a fly:

And had a harmless man tripped you by chance,

How would you wait him, stand or step aside,

When next you heard he rolled your way? Enough.

10 "Giuseppe Caponsacchi!" Guido cried;
And open flew the door: enough again.
Vengeance, you know, burst, like a mountain-wave

That holds a monster in it, over the house,
And wiped its filthy four walls free at last

With a wash of hell-fire, — father, mother, wife,

Killed them all, bathed his name clean in their blood,

And, reeking so, was caught, his friends and he,

Haled hither and imprisoned yesternight
O' the day all this was.

Now, Sir, tale is told,

20 Of how the old couple come to lie in state
Though hacked to pieces, — never, the expert say,
So thorough a study of stabbing — while the wife

(Viper-like, very difficult to slay)
Writhes still through every ring of her,

poor wretch,
At the Hospital hard by — survives, we'll

hope,
To somewhat purify her putrid soul

By full confession, make so much amends
While time lasts; since at day's end die she

must.

For Caponsacchi, — why, they'll have him here,

30 As hero of the adventure, who so fit
To figure in the coming Carnival?
'Twill make the fortune of whate'er saloon

Hears him recount, with helpful cheek,
and eye

Hotly indignant now, now dewy-dimmed,
The incidents of flight, pursuit, surprise,

Capture, with hints of kisses all between —
While Guido, wholly unromantic spouse,

No longer fit to laugh at since the blood
Gave the broad farce an all too brutal air,

40 Why, he, and those four luckless friends
of his

May tumble in the straw this bitter day —
Laid by the heels i' the New Prison, I hear,

To bide their trial, since trial, and for the life,

Follows if but for form's sake: yes, indeed!

But with a certain issue: no dispute,
"Try him," bids law: formalities oblige:

But as to the issue, — look me in the face! —

If the law thinks to find them guilty, Sir,
Master or men — touch one hair of the

five,
Then I say in the name of all that's left

Of honour in Rome, civility i' the world
Whereof Rome boasts herself the central

source, —
There's an end to all hope of justice more.

Astræa's¹ gone indeed, let hope go too!
Who is it dares impugn the natural law,

Deny God's word "the faithless wife shall die"?

What, are we blind? How can we fail to learn

This crowd of miseries make the man a mark,

Accumulate on one devoted head
For our example? — yours and mine who

read
Its lesson thus — "Henceforward let none

dare
"Stand, like a natural in the public way,
"Letting the very urchins twitch his beard

"And tweak his nose, to earn a nickname

so,
"Be styled male-Grissel or else modern

Job!"
Had Guido, in the twinkling of an eye,

Summed up the reckoning, promptly paid himself,

That morning when he came up with the pair

At the wayside inn, — exacted his just debt

By aid of what first mattock, pitchfork, 70
axe

Came to hand in the helpful stable-yard,
And with that axe, if providence so pleased,

Cloven each head, by some Rolando-stroke,

In one clean cut from crown to clavicle,²
— Slain the priest-gallant, the wife-paramour,

Sticking, for all defence, in each skull's cleft

The rhyme and reason of the stroke thus dealt,

To-wit, those letters and last evidence
Of shame, each package in its proper

place, —
Bidding, who pitied, undistend the 80
skulls, —

¹ *Astræa*: daughter of Zeus and Themis, whose departure from earth marked the ending of the golden age.

² *Clavicle*: collar-bone.

I say, the world had praised the man.

But no!

That were too plain, too straight, too simply just!

He hesitates, calls law forsooth to help.

And law, distasteful to who calls in law
When honour is beforehand and would serve,

What wonder if law hesitate in turn,
Plead her disuse to calls o' the kind, reply
(Smiling a little) "Tis yourself assess

"The worth of what's lost, sum of damage done.

"What you touched with so light a fingertip,

"You whose concern it was to grasp the thing,

"Why must law gird herself and grapple with?

"Law, alien to the actor whose warm blood

"Asks heat from law whose veins run luke-warm milk, —

"What you dealt lightly with, shall law make out

"Heinous forsooth?"

Sir, what's the good of law
In a case o' the kind? None, as she all but says.

Call in law when a neighbour breaks your fence,

Cribs from your field, tampers with rent or lease,

Touches the purse or pocket, — but woos your wife?

No: take the old way trod when men were men!

Guido preferred the new path, — for his pains,

Stuck in a quagmire, floundered worse and worse

Until he managed somehow scramble back

Into the safe sure rutted road once more,
Revenged his own wrong like a gentleman.

Once back 'mid the familiar prints, no doubt

He made too rash amends for his first fault,
Vaulted too loftily over what barred him late,

And lit i' the mire again, — the common chance,

The natural over-energy: the deed
Maladroit yields three deaths instead of one,

And one life left: for where's the Canon's corpse?

All which is the worse for Guido, but, be frank —

The better for you and me and all the world,

Husbands of wives, especially in Rome.
The thing is put right, in the old place, —

ay,

The rod hangs on its nail behind the door,

Fresh from the brine: a matter I commend

To the notice, during Carnival that's near, 40
Of a certain what's-his-name and jackanapes

Somewhat too civil of eves with lute and song

About a house here, where I keep a wife.
(You, being his cousin, may go tell him so.)

III.—THE OTHER HALF-ROME

ANOTHER day that finds her living yet,
Little Pompilia, with the patient brow

And lamentable smile on those poor lips,
And, under the white hospital-array,

A flower-like body, to frighten at a bruise
You'd think, yet now, stabbed through 50

and through again,
Alive i' the ruins. 'Tis a miracle.

It seems that, when her husband struck her first,

She prayed Madonna just that she might live

So long as to confess and be absolved;
And whether it was that, all her sad life

long
Never before successful in a prayer,

This prayer rose with authority too dread, —

Or whether, because earth was hell to her,
By compensation, when the blackness

broke
She got one glimpse of quiet and the cool 60

blue,
To show her for a moment such things

were, —
Or else, — as the Augustinian Brother

thinks,
The friar who took confession from her lip, —

When a probationary soul that moved
From nobleness to nobleness, as she,

Over the rough way of the world, succumbs,

Bloodies its last thorn with unflinching foot,

The angels love to do their work betimes,
Staunch some wounds here nor leave so

much for God.
Who knows? However it be, confessed, 70

absolved,
She lies, with overplus of life beside

To speak and right herself from first to last,

Right the friend also, lamb-pure, lion-brave,
Care for the boy's concerns, to save the son

From the sire, her two-weeks' infant orphaned thus,

And — with best smile of all reserved for him —

Pardon that sire and husband from the heart.

A miracle, so tell your Molinists!

There she lies in the long white lazaret-house.
 Rome has besieged, these two days, never doubt,
 Saint Anna's where she waits her death, to hear
 Though but the chink o' the bell, turn o' the hinge
 When the reluctant wicket opes at last,
 Lets in, on now this and now that pretence,
 Too many by half, — complain the men of art, —
 For a patient in such plight. The lawyers first
 Paid the due visit — justice must be done;
 10 They took her witness, why the murder was.
 Then the priests followed properly, — a soul
 To shrive; 'twas Brother Celestine's own right,
 The same who noises thus her gifts abroad.
 But many more, who found they were old friends,
 Pushed in to have their stare and take their talk
 And go forth boasting of it and to boast.
 Old Monna Baldi chatters like a jay,
 Swears — but that, prematurely trundled out
 Just as she felt the benefit begin,
 20 The miracle was snapped up by somebody, —
 Her palsied limb 'gan prick and promise life
 At touch o' the bedclothes merely, — how much more
 Had she but brushed the body as she tried!
 Cavalier Carlo — well, there's some excuse
 For him — Maratta who paints Virgins so —
 He too must fee the porter and slip by
 With pencil cut and paper squared, and straight
 There was he figuring away at face:
 "A lovelier face is not in Rome," cried he,
 30 "Shaped like a peacock's egg, the pure as pearl,
 "That hatches you anon a snow-white chick."
 Then, oh that pair of eyes, that pendent hair,
 Black this and black the other! Mighty fine —
 But nobody cared ask to paint the same,
 Nor grew a poet over hair and eyes
 Four little years ago when, ask and have,
 The woman who wakes all this rapture leaped
 Flower-like from out her window long enough,
 As much uncomplimented as uncropped
 40 By comers and goers in Via Vittoria:
 eh?

'Tis just a flower's fate: past parterre we trip,
 Till peradventure someone plucks our sleeve —
 "Yon blossom at the briar's end, that's the rose
 "Two jealous people fought for yesterday
 "And killed each other: see, there's undisturbed
 "A pretty pool at the root, of rival red!"
 Then cry we "Ah, the perfect paragon!"
 Then crave we "Just one keepsake-leaf for us!"
 Truth lies between: there's anyhow a child
 Of seventeen years, whether a flower or weed,
 Ruined: who did it shall account to Christ —
 Having no pity on the harmless life
 And gentle face and girlish form he found,
 And thus flings back. Go practise if you please
 With men and women: leave a child alone
 For Christ's particular love's sake! — so I say.
 Somebody, at the bedside, said much more,
 Took on him to explain the secret cause
 O' the crime: quoth he, "Such crimes are very rife,
 "Explode nor make us wonder now-a-days,
 "Seeing that Antichrist disseminates
 "That doctrine of the Philosophic Sin:
 "Molinos' sect will soon make earth too hot!"
 "Nay," groaned the Augustinian, "what's there new?
 "Crime will not fail to flare up from men's hearts
 "While hearts are men's and so born criminal;
 "Which one fact, always old yet ever new,
 "Accounts for so much crime that, for my part,
 "Molinos may go whistle to the wind
 "That waits outside a certain church, you know!"
 Though really it does seem as if she here,
 Pompilia, living so and dying thus,
 Has had undue experience how much crime
 A heart can hatch. Why was she made to learn
 — Not you, not I, not even Molinos' self —
 What Guido Franceschini's heart could hold?
 Thus saintship is effected probably;
 No sparing saints the process! — which the more
 Tends to the reconciling us, no saints,
 To sinnership, immunity and all.

For see now: Pietro and Violante's life
Till seventeen years ago, all Rome might
note

And quote for happy — see the signs distinct

Of happiness as we yon Triton's¹ trump.
What could they be but happy? — balanced so,

Nor low i' the social scale nor yet too high,
Nor poor nor richer than comports with ease,

Nor bright and envied, nor obscure and scorned,

Nor so young that their pleasures fell too thick,

c Nor old past catching pleasure when it fell,
Nothing above, below the just degree,
All at the mean where joy's components mix.
So again, in the couple's very souls
You saw the adequate half with half to match,

Each having and each lacking somewhat, both

Making a whole that had all and lacked nought.

The round and sound, in whose composure just

The acquiescent and recipient side
Was Pietro's, and the stirring striving one
Violante's: both in union gave the due
Quietude, enterprise, craving and content,
Which go to bodily health and peace of mind.

But, as 'tis said a body, rightly mixed,
Each element in equipoise, would last
Too long and live for ever, — accordingly
Holds a germ — sand-grain weight too much i' the scale —

Ordained to get predominance one day
And so bring all to ruin and release, —
Not otherwise a fatal germ lurked here:
"With mortals much must go, but something stays;

"Nothing will stay of our so happy selves."

Out of the very ripeness of life's core
A worm was bred — "Our life shall leave no fruit."

Enough of bliss, they thought, could bliss bear seed,

Yield its like, propagate a bliss in turn
And keep the kind up; not supplant themselves

But put in evidence, record they were,
Show them, when done with, i' the shape of a child.

"'Tis in a child, man and wife grow complete,

io "One flesh: God says so: let him do his work!"

¹ *Yon Triton*: see Book I. p. 660, l. 78. The speaker is represented as being in the Piazza Barberini, near Bernini's fountain, composed of a Triton supported by dolphins.

Now, one reminder of this gnawing want,
One special prick o' the maggot at the core,
Always befell when, as the day came round,
A certain yearly sum, — our Pietro being,
As the long name runs, an usufructuary, —
Dropped in the common bag as interest
Of money, his till death, not afterward,
Failing an heir: an heir would take and take,

A child of theirs be wealthy in their place
To nobody's hurt — the stranger else³⁰ seized all.

Prosperity rolled river-like and stopped,
Making their mill go; but when wheel wore out,

The wave would find a space and sweep on free

And, half-a-mile off, grind some neighbour's corn.

Adam-like, Pietro sighed and said no more:
Eve saw the apple was fair and good to taste,

So, plucked it, having asked the snake advice.

She told her husband God was merciful,
And his and her prayer granted at the last:
Let the old mill-stone moulder, — wheel⁶⁰ unworn,

Quartz from the quarry, shot into the stream

Adroitly, as before should go bring grist —
Their house continued to them by an heir,
Their vacant heart replenished with a child.

We have her own confession at full length
Made in the first remorse: 'twas Jubilee
Pealed in the ear o' the conscience and it woke.

She found she had offended God no doubt,
So much was plain from what had happened since,

Misfortune on misfortune; but she harmed⁷⁰ no one i' the world, so far as she could see.

The act had gladdened Pietro to the height,
Her spouse whom God himself must gladden so

Or not at all: thus much seems probable
From the implicit faith, or rather say
Stupid credulity of the foolish man
Who swallowed such a tale nor strained a whit

Even at his wife's far-over-fifty years
Matching his sixty-and-under. Him she blessed;

And as for doing any detriment⁸⁰
To the veritable heir, — why, tell her first
Who was he? Which of all the hands held up

I' the crowd, one day would gather round their gate,

Did she so wrong by intercepting thus
The due, spendthrift fortune thought to flit?

- For a scramble just to make the mob break
shins?
She kept it, saved them kicks and cuffs
thereby.
While at the least one good work had she
wrought,
Good, clearly and incontestably! Her
cheat —
What was it to its subject, the child's self,
But charity and religion? See the girl!
A body most like — a soul too probably —
Doomed to death, such a double death as
waits
The illicit offspring of a common trull,
10 Sure to resent and forthwith rid herself
Of a mere interruption to sin's trade,
In the efficacious way old Tiber knows.
Was not so much proved by the ready sale
O' the child, glad transfer of this irksome
chance?
Well then, she had caught up this castaway:
This fragile egg, some careless wild bird
dropped,
She had picked from where it waited the
foot-fall,
And put in her own breast till forth broke
finch
Able to sing God praise on mornings now.
20 What so excessive harm was done? — she
asked.
To which demand the dreadful answer
comes —
For that same deed, now at Lorenzo's
church,
Both agents, conscious and unconscious,
lie;
While she, the deed was done to benefit,
Lies also, the most lamentable of things,
Yonder where curious people count her
breaths,
Calculate how long yet the little life
Unspilt may serve their turn nor spoil the
show,
Give them their story, then the church its
group.
30 Well, having gained Pompilia, the girl
grew
I' the midst of Pietro here, Violante there,
Each, like a semicircle with stretched arms,
Joining the other round her preciousness —
Two walls that go about a garden-plot
Where a chance sliver, branchlet split from
bole
Of some tongue-leaved eye-figured Eden
tree,
Filched by two exiles and borne far away,
Patiently glorifies their solitude, —
Year by year mounting, grade by grade
surmount
40 The builded brick-work, yet is compassed
still,
Still hidden happily and shielded safe, —
- Else why should miracle have graced the
ground?
But on the twelfth sun that brought April
there
What meant that laugh? The coping-
stone was reached:
Nay, above towered a light tuft of bloom
To be toyed with by butterfly or bee,
Done good to or else harm to from outside:
Pompilia's root, stalk and a branch or
two
Home enclosed still, the rest would be the
world's.
All which was taught our couple though 5
obtuse,
Since walls have ears, when one day brought
a priest,
Smooth-mannered soft-speeched sleek-
cheeked visitor,
The notable Abate Paolo — known
As younger brother of a Tuscan house
Whereof the actual representative,
Count Guido, had employed his youth and
age
In culture of Rome's most productive
plant —
A cardinal: but years pass and change
comes,
In token of which, here was our Paolo
brought
To broach a weighty business. Might he 6
speak?
Yes — to Violante somehow caught alone
While Pietro took his after-dinner doze,
And the young maiden, busily as befits,
Minded her broider-frame three chambers
off.
So — giving now his great flap-hat a gloss
With flat o' the hand between-whiles,
soothing now
The silk from out its creases o'er the calf,
Setting the stocking clerical again,
But never disengaging, once engaged,
The thin clear grey hold of his eyes on
her —
He dissertated on that Tuscan house,
Those Franceschini, — very old they
were —
Not rich however — oh, not rich, at least,
As people look to be who, low i' the scale
One way, have reason, rising all they can
By favour of the money-bag! 'tis fair —
Do all gifts go together? But don't sup-
pose
That being not so rich means all so poor!
Say rather, well enough — i' the way, in-
deed,
Ha, ha, to fortune better than the best:
Since if his brother's patron-friend kept
faith,
Put into promised play the Cardinalate,
Their house might wear the red cloth that
keeps warm.

Would but the Count have patience —
there's the point!

For he was slipping into years apace,
And years make men restless — they needs
must spy

Some certainty, some sort of end assured,
Some sparkle, tho' from topmost beacon-
tip,

That warrants life a harbour through the
haze.

In short, call him fantastic as you choose,
Guido was home-sick, yearned for the old
sights

And usual faces, — fain would settle him-
self

10 And have the patron's bounty when it fell
Irrigate far rather than deluge near,
Go fertilise Arezzo, not flood Rome.

Sooth to say, 'twas the wiser wish: the
Count

Proved wanting in ambition, — let us
avouch,

Since truth is best, — in callousness of
heart,

And winced at pin-pricks whereby honours
hang

A ribbon o'er each puncture: his — no
soul

Ecclesiastic (here the hat was brushed)
Humble but self-sustaining, calm and cold,

20 Having, as one who puts his hand to the
plough,

Renounced the over-vivid family-feel —
Poor brother Guido! All too plain, he
pined

Amid Rome's pomp and glare for dingi-
ness

And that dilapidated palace-shell
Vast as a quarry and, very like, as bare —

Since to this comes old grandeur now-a-
days —

Or that absurd wild villa in the waste
O' the hill side, breezy though, for who
likes air,

Vittiano, nor unpleasant with its vines,
30 Outside the city and the summer heats.

And now his harping on this one tense
chord

The villa and the palace, palace this
And villa the other, all day and all night

Creaked like the implacable cicala's cry
And made one's ear-drum ache: nought
else would serve

But that, to light his mother's visage up
With second youth, hope, gaiety again,

He must find straightway, woo and haply
win

And bear away triumphant back some wife.

40 Well now, the man was rational in his way
He, the Abate, — ought he to interpose?

Unless by straining still his tutelage
(Priesthood leaps over elder-brothership)

Across this difficulty: then let go,

Leave the poor fellow in peace! Would
that be wrong?

There was no making Guido great, it
seems,

Spite of himself: then happy be his dole!
Indeed, the Abate's little interest

Was somewhat nearly touched i' the case
they saw:

Since if his simple kinsman so were bent, 50
Began his rounds in Rome to catch a wife,

Full soon would such unworldliness sur-
prise

The rare bird, sprinkle salt on phoenix' tail,
And so secure the nest a sparrow-hawk.

No lack of mothers here in Rome, — no
dread

Of daughters lured as larks by looking-
glass!

The first name-pecking credit-scratching
fowl

Would drop her unfledged cuckoo in our
nest

To gather greyness there, give voice at
length

And shame the brood . . . but it was long 60
ago

When crusades were, and we sent eagles
forth!

No, that at least the Abate could forestall.
He read the thought within his brother's
word,

Knew what he purposed better than him-
self.

We want no name and fame — having our
own:

No worldly aggrandisement — such we
fly:

But if some wonder of a woman's-heart
Were yet untainted on this grimy earth,

Tender and true — tradition tells of such —
Prepared to pant in time and tune with 70
ours —

If some good girl (a girl, since she must
take

The new bent, live new life, adopt new
modes)

Not wealthy (Guido for his rank was poor)
But with whatever dowry came to hand, —

There were the lady-love predestinate!
And somehow the Abate's guardian eye —

Scintillant, rutilant, fraternal fire, —
Roving round every way had seized the
prize

— The instinct of us, we, the spirituality!
Come, cards on table; was it true or false 80

That here — here in this very tenement —
Yea, Via Vittoria did a marvel hide,

Lily of a maiden, white with intact leaf
Guessed thro' the sheath that saved it from
the sun?

A daughter with the mother's hands still
clasped

Over her head for fillet virginal,

A wife worth Guido's house and hand and heart?

He came to see; had spoken, he could no less —

(A final cherish of the stockinged calf)
If harm were, — well, the matter was off his mind.

Then with the great air did he kiss, devout,
Violante's hand, and rise up his whole height

(A certain purple gleam about the black)
And go forth grandly, — as if the Pope came next.

And so Violante rubbed her eyes awhile,
10 Got up too, walked to wake her Pietro soon
And pour into his ear the mighty news
How somebody had somehow somewhere seen

Their tree-top-tuft of bloom above the wall,

And came now to apprise them the tree's self

Was no such crab-sort as should go feed swine,

But veritable gold, the Hesperian ball¹
Ordained for Hercules to haste and pluck,
And bear and give the Gods to banquet with —

Hercules standing ready at the door.

20 Whereon did Pietro rub his eyes in turn,
Look very wise, a little woeful too,
Then, periwig on head, and cane in hand,

Sally forth dignifiedly into the Square
Of Spain² across Babbuino the six steps,
Toward the Boat-fountain where our idler's lounge, —

Ask, for form's sake, who Hercules might be,

And have congratulation from the world.

Heartily laughed the world in his fool's-face

And told him Hercules was just the heir

30 To the stubble once a corn-field, and brick-heap

Where used to be a dwelling-place now burned.

Guido and Franceschini; a Count, — ay:
But a cross³ i' the poke to bless the Countship? No!

All gone except sloth, pride, rapacity,
Humours of the imposthume incident

¹ *The Hesperian ball*: the golden apple which Hercules was required to fetch from the garden of the Hesperides.

² *The Square of Spain*: the Piazza di Spagna, in the present "English quarter" of Rome. The Via del Babuino runs into it, and the "Boat-fountain" (Fontana della Barcaccia) stands in it.

³ *Cross*: i.e., a coin; an old expression, found in Goldsmith, Dryden, and earlier writers.

To rich blood that runs thin, — nursed to a head

By the rankly-salted soil — a cardinal's court

Where, parasite and picker-up of crumbs,
He had hung on long, and now, let go, said some,

Shaken off, said others, — but in any case 40

Tired of the trade and something worse for wear,

Was wanting to change town for country quick,

Go home again: let Pietro help him home!

The brother, Abate Paolo, shrewder mouse,

Had pricked for comfortable quarters, inched

Into the core of Rome, and fattened so;

But Guido, over-burly for rat's hole

Suited to clerical slimness, starved outside,
Must shift for himself: and so the shift was this!

What, was the snug retreat of Pietro 50 tracked,

The little provision for his old age snuffed?

"Oh, make your girl a lady, an you list,

"But have more mercy on our wit than vaunt

"Your bargain as we burgesses who brag!

"Why, Goodman Dullard, if a friend must speak,

"Would the Count, think you, stoop to you and yours

"Were there the value of one penny-piece

"To rattle 'twixt his palms — or likelier laugh,

"Bid your Pompilia help you black his shoe?"

Home again, shaking oft the puzzled pate, 60

Went Pietro to announce a change indeed,

Yet point Violante where some solace lay

Of a rueful sort, — the taper, quenched so soon,

Had ended merely in a snuff, not stink —

Congratulate there was one hope the less

Not misery the more: and so an end.

The marriage thus impossible, the rest followed: our spokesman, Paolo, heard

his fate,

Resignedly Count Guido bore the blow:

Violante wiped away the transient tear, 70

Renounced the playing Danaë to gold dreams,

Praised much her Pietro's prompt sagaciousness,

Found neighbours' envy natural, lightly laughed

At gossips' malice, fairly wrapped herself

In her integrity three folds about,

And, letting pass a little day or two,

Threw, even over that integrity,

Another wrappage, namely one thick veil

That hid her, matron-wise, from head to foot,

And, by the hand holding a girl veiled too,
Stood, one dim end of a December day,
In Saint Lorenzo on the altar-step —
Just where she lies now and that girl will
lie —

Only with fifty candles' company
Now, in the place of the poor winking one
Which saw, — doors shut and sacristan
made sure, —

A priest — perhaps Abate Paolo — wed
10 Guido clandestinely, irrevocably
To his Pompilia aged thirteen years
And five months, — witness the church
register, —

Pompilia, (thus become Count Guido's wife
Clandestinely, irrevocably his,)

Who all the while had borne, from first to
last,

As brisk a part i' the bargain, as yon lamb,
Brought forth from basket and set out for
sale,

Bears while they chaffer, wary market-man
And voluble housewife, o'er it, — each in
turn

20 Patting the curly calm unconscious head,
With the shambles ready round the corner
there,

When the talk's talked out and a bargain
struck.

Transfer complete, why, Pietro was ap-
prised.

Violante sobbed the sobs and prayed the
prayers

And said the serpent tempted so she fell,
Till Pietro had to clear his brow apace
And make the best of matters: wrath at
first, —

How else? pacification presently,
Why not? — could flesh withstand the
impurpled one,

30 The very Cardinal, Paolo's patron-friend?
Who, justifiably surnamed "a hinge,"¹
Knew where the mollifying oil should drop
To cure the creak o' the valve, — con-
siderate

For frailty, patient in a naughty world.
He even volunteered to supervise
The rough draught of those marriage-
articles

Signed in a hurry by Pietro, since re-
voked:

Trust's politic, suspicion does the harm,
There is but one way to brow-beat this
world,

40 Dumb-founder doubt, and repay scorn in
kind, —

To go on trusting, namely, till faith move
Mountains.

¹ A hinge: the title Cardinal is derived from
cardo, "a hinge."

And faith here made the mountains
move.

Why, friends whose zeal cried "Caution
ere too late!" —

Bade "Pause ere jump, with both feet
joined, on slough!" —

Counselled "If rashness then, now tem-
perance!" —

Heard for their pains that Pietro had closed
eyes,

Jumped and was in the middle of the mire,
Money and all, just what should sink a
man.

By the mere marriage, Guido gained forth-
with

Dowry, his wife's right; no rescinding 50
there:

But Pietro, why must he needs ratify
One gift Violante gave, pay down one doit
Promised in first fool's-flurry? Grasp the
bag

Lest the son's service flag, — is reason and
rhyme,

Above all when the son's a son-in-law.
Words to the wind! The parents cast
their lot

Into the lap o' the daughter: and the son
Now with a right to lie there, took what
fell,

Pietro's whole having and holding, house
and field,

Goods, chattels and effects, his worldly 60
worth

Present and in perspective, all renounced
In favour of Guido. As for the usufruct —
The interest now, the principal anon,
Would Guido please to wait, at Pietro's
death:

Till when, he must support the couple's
charge,

Bear with them, housemates, pensionaries,
pawned

To an alien for fulfilment of their pact.
Guido should at discretion deal them orts,²

Bread-bounty in Arezzo the strange
place, —

They who had lived deliciously and rolled 70
Rome's choicest comfit 'neath the tongue
before.

Into this quag, "jump" bade the Cardinal!
And neck-deep in a minute there flounced
they.

But they touched bottom at Arezzo:
there —

Four months' experience of how craft and
greed

Quickened by penury and pretentious hate
Of plain truth, brutify and bestialise, —

Four months' taste of apportioned inso-
lence,

Cruelty graduated, dose by dose

² Orts: scraps.

- Of ruffianism dealt out at bed and board,
And lo, the work was done, success clapped
hands.
The starved, stripped, beaten brace of
stupid dupes
Broke at last in their desperation loose,
Fled away for their lives, and lucky so;
Found their account in casting coat afar
And bearing off a shred of skin at least:
Left Guido lord o' the prey, as the lion is,
And, careless what came after, carried
their wrongs
- 10 To Rome, — I nothing doubt, with such
remorse
As folly feels, since pain can make it wise,
But crime, past wisdom, which is inno-
cence,
Needs not be plagued with till a later day.
- Pietro went back to beg from door to door,
In hope that memory not quite extinct
Of cheery days and festive nights would
move
Friends and acquaintance — after the
natural laugh,
And tributary "Just as we foretold —"
To show some bowels, give the dregs o' the
cup,
- 20 Scraps of the trencher, to their host that
was,
Or let him share the mat with the mastiff,
he
Who lived large and kept open house so
long.
Not so Violante: ever ahead i' the march,
Quick at the bye-road and the cut-across,
She went first to the best adviser, God —
Whose finger unmistakably was felt
In all this retribution of the past.
Here was the prize of sin, luck of a lie!
But here too was what Holy Year would
help,
- 30 Bound to rid sinners of sin vulgar, sin
Abnormal, sin prodigious, up to sin
Impossible and supposed for Jubilee'
sake:
To lift the leadenest of lies, let soar
The soul unhampered by a feather-weight.
"I will" said she "go burn out this bad
hole
"That breeds the scorpion, baulk the
plague at least
"Of hope to further plague by progeny:
"I will confess my fault, be punished, yes,
"But pardoned too: Saint Peter pays for
all."
- 40 So, with the crowd she mixed, made for the
dome,
Through the great door new-broken for
the nonce
Marched, muffled more than ever matron-
wise,
Up the left nave to the formidable throne,
- Fell into file with this the poisoner
And that the parricide, and reached in turn
The poor repugnant Penitentiary
Set at this gully-hole o' the world's dis-
charge
To help the frightfullest of filth have vent,
And then knelt down and whispered in his
ear
How she had bought Pompilia, palmed the 54
babe
On Pietro, passed the girl off as their child
To Guido, and defrauded of his due
This one and that one, — more than she
could name,
Until her solid piece of wickedness
Happened to split and spread woe far and
wide:
Contritely now she brought the case for
cure.
- Replied the throne — "Ere God forgive
the guilt,
"Make man some restitution! Do your
part!
"The owners of your husband's heritage,
"Barred thence by this pretended birth and 64
heir, —
"Tell them, the bar came so, is broken so,
"Theirs be the due reversion as before!
"Your husband who, no partner in the
guilt,
"Suffers the penalty, led blindfold thus
"By love of what he thought his flesh and
blood
"To alienate his all in her behalf, —
"Tell him too such contract is null and
void!
"Last, he who personates your son-in-law,
"Who with sealed eyes and stopped ears,
tame and mute
"Took at your hand that bastard of a 74
whore
"You called your daughter and he calls
his wife, —
"Tell him, and bear the anger which is
just!
"Then, penance so performed, may pardon
be!"
- Who could gainsay this just and right
award?
Nobody in the world: but, out o' the world,
Who knows? — might tim'd intervention
be
From any makeshift of an angel-guide,
Substitute for celestial guardianship,
Pretending to take care of the girl's self:
"Woman, confessing crime is healthy work, 80
"And telling truth relieves a liar like you,
"But how of my quite unconsidered charge?
"No thought if, while this good befalls
yourself,
"Aught in the way of harm may find out
her?"

No least thought, I assure you: truth being
truth,
Tell it and shame the devil!
Said and done:
Home went Violante, disbosomed all:
And Pietro who, six months before, had
borne
Word after word of such a piece of news
Like so much cold steel inched through his
breast-blade,
Now at its entry gave a leap for joy,
As who — what did I say of one in a
quag? —
Should catch a hand from heaven and
spring thereby
10 Out of the mud, on ten toes stand once
more.
"What? All that used to be, may be again?
"My money mine again, my house, my
land,
"My chairs and tables, all mine evermore?
"What, the girl's dowry never was the girl's,
"And, unpaid yet, is never now to pay?
"Then the girl's self, my pale Pompilia
child
"That used to be my own with her great
eyes —
"He who drove us forth, why should he
keep her
"When proved as very a pauper as himself?
20 "Will she come back, with nothing changed
at all,
"And laugh 'But how you dreamed un-
easily!
"I saw the great drops stand here on your
brow —
"Did I do wrong to wake you with a kiss?
"No, indeed, darling! No, for wide awake
"I see another outburst of surprise:
"The lout-lord, bully-beggar, braggart-
sneak,
"Who not content with cutting purse, crops
ear —
"Assuredly it shall be salve to mine
"When this great news red-letters him,
the rogue!
30 "Ay, let him taste the teeth o' the trap,
this fox,
"Give us our lamb back, golden fleece and
all,
"Let her creep in and warm our breasts
again!
"Why care for the past? We three are
our old selves,
"And know now what the outside world is
worth."
And so, he carried case before the courts;
And there Violante, blushing to the
bone,
Made public declaration of her fault,
Renounced her motherhood, and prayed
the law
To interpose, frustrate of its effect
40 Her folly, and redress the injury done.

Whereof was the disastrous consequence,
That though indisputably clear the case
(For thirteen years are not so large a lapse,
And still six witnesses survived in Rome
To prove the truth o' the tale) — yet, pa-
tent wrong
Seemed Guido's; the first cheat had
chanced on him:
Here was the pity that, deciding right,
Those who began the wrong would gain
the prize.
Guido pronounced the story one long lie
Lied to do robbery and take revenge: 54
Or say it were no lie at all but truth,
Then, it both robbed the right heirs and
shamed him
Without revenge to humanise the deed:
What had he done when first they shamed
him thus?
But that were too fantastic: losels they,
And leasing this world's-wonder of a lie,
They lied to blot him though it brand
themselves.
So answered Guido through the Abate's
mouth.
Wherefore the court, its customary way,
Inclined to the middle course the sage 60
affect.
They held the child to be a changeling, —
good:
But, lest the husband got no good thereby,
They willed the dowry, though not hers at
all,
Should yet be his, if not by right then
grace —
Part-payment for the plain injustice done.
As for that other contract, Pietro's work,
Renunciation of his own estate,
That must be cancelled — give him back
his gifts,
He was no party to the cheat at least!
So ran the judgment: — whence a prompt 70
appeal
On both sides, seeing right is absolute.
Cried Pietro, "Is the child no child of
mine?
"Why give her a child's dowry?" — "Have
I right
"To the dowry, why not to the rest as
well?"
Cried Guido, or cried Paolo in his name!
Till law said "Reinvestigate the case!"
And so the matter pends, to this same day.
Hence new disaster — here no outlet
seemed;
Whatever the fortune of the battle-field,
No path whereby the fatal man might 80
march
Victorious, wreath on head and spoils in
hand,
And back turned full upon the baffled
foe, —

Nor cranny whence, desperate and disgraced,
Stripped to the skin, he might be fain to crawl

Worm-like, and so away with his defeat
To other fortune and a novel prey.

No, he was pinned to the place there, left alone

With his immense hate and, the solitary
Subject to satisfy that hate, his wife.

"Cast her off? Turn her naked out of doors?

"Easily said! But still the action pends,

10 "Still dowry, principal and interest,

"Pietro's possessions, all I bargained for, —

"Any good day, be but my friends alert,

"May give them me if she continue mine.

"Yet, keep her? Keep the puppet of my foci —

"Her voice that lisps me back their curse — her eye

"They lend their leer of triumph to — her lip

"I touch and taste their very filth upon?"

In short, he also took the middle course
Rome taught him — did at last excogitate

20 How he might keep the good and leave the bad

Twined in revenge, yet extricable, — nay
Make the very hate's eruption, very rush

Of the unpent sluice of cruelty relieve

His heart first, then go fertilise his field.

What if the girl-wife, tortured with due care,

Should take, as though spontaneously, the road

It were impolitic to thrust her on?

If, goaded, she broke out in full revolt,
Followed her parents i' the face o' the world,

30 Branded as runaway not castaway,
Self-sentenced and self-punished in the act?

So should the loathed form and detested face

Launch themselves into hell and there be lost

While he looked o'er the brink with folded arms;

So should the heaped-up shames go shuddering back

O' the head o' the heapers, Pietro and his wife,

And bury in the breakage three at once:
While Guido, left free, no one right re-

nounced,

Gain present, gain prospective, all the gain,

40 None of the wife except her rights absorbed,
Should ask law what it was law paused

about —

If law were dubious still whose word to take,
The husband's — dignified and derelict,

Or the wife's — the . . . what I tell you.

It should be.

Guido's first step was to take pen, indite
A letter to the Abate, — not his own,

His wife's, — she should re-write, sign,
seal and send.

She liberally told the household-news,
Rejoiced her vile progenitors were gone,
Revealed their malice — how they even 50
laid

A last injunction on her, when they fled,
That she should forthwith find a paramour,

Complot with him to gather spoil enough,
Then burn the house down, — taking

previous care
To poison all its inmates overnight, —

And so companioned, so provisioned too,
Follow to Rome and there join fortunes

gay.

This letter, traced in pencil-characters;
Guido as easily got re-traced in ink

By his wife's pen, guided from end to end, 60
As if it had been just so much Chinese.

For why? That wife could broider, sing
perhaps,

Pray certainly, but no more read than write
This letter "which yet write she must," he

said,
"Being half courtesy and compliment,

"Half sisterliness: take the thing on
trust!"

She had as readily re-traced the words
Of her own death-warrant, — in some

sort 'twas so.

This letter the Abate in due course
Communicated to such curious souls 70

In Rome as needs must pry into the cause
Of quarrel, why the Comparini fled

The Franceschini, whence the grievance
grew,

What the hubbub meant: "Nay, — see
the wife's own word,

"Authentic answer! Tell detractors too
"There's a plan formed, a programme

figured here
"— Pray God no after-practice put to

proof,
"This letter cast no light upon, one day!"

So much for what should work in Rome:
back now

To Arezzo, follow up the project there, 80
Forward the next step with as bold a

foot,

And plague Pompilia to the height, you see!
Accordingly did Guido set himself

To worry up and down, across, around,
The woman, hemmed in by her household-

bars, — -
Chase her about the coop of daily life,

Having first stopped each outlet thence
save one

Which, like bird with a ferret in her haunt,
She needs must seize as sole way of escape

Though there was tied and twittering a 90
decoy

To seem as if it tempted, — just the plume
O' the popinjay, not a real respite there
From tooth and claw of something in the
dark, —

Giuseppe Caponsacchi

Now begins

The tenebrific passage of the tale:
How hold a light, display the cavern's
gorge?

How, in this phase of the affair, show truth?
Here is the dying wife who smiles and says
"So it was, — so it was not, — how it was,

10 "I never knew nor ever care to know —"
Till they all weep, physician, man of law,
Even that poor old bit of battered brass
Beaten out of all shape by the world's sins,
Common utensil of the lazar-house —
Confessor Celestino groans "'Tis truth,
"All truth and only truth: there's some-
thing here,

"Some presence in the room beside us all,
"Something that every lie expires before:
"No question she was pure from first to
last."

20 So far is well and helps us to believe:
But beyond, she the helpless, simple-sweet
Or silly-sooth, unskilled to break one blow
At her good fame by putting finger forth, —
How can she render service to the truth?
The bird says "So I fluttered where a
springe

"Caught me: the springe did not contrive
itself,

"That I know: who contrived it, God
forgive!"

But we, who hear no voice and have dry
eyes,

Must ask, — we cannot else, absolving
her, —

30 How of the part played by that same decoy
I' the catching, caging? Was himself
caught first?

We deal here with no innocent at least,
No witless victim, — he's a man of the
age

And priest beside, — persuade the mocking
world

Mere charity boiled over in this sort!

He whose own safety too, — (the Pope's
apprised —

Good-natured with the secular offence,
The Pope looks grave on priesthood in a
scrape)

Our priest's own safety therefore, may-be
life,

40 Hangs on the issue! You will find it hard.
Guido is here to meet you with fixed foot,
Stiff like a statue — "Leave what went
before!

"My wife fled i' the company of a priest,
"Spent two days and two nights alone with
him:

"Leave what came after!" He stands
hard to throw.

Moreover priests are merely flesh and
blood;

When we get weakness, and no guilt beside,
'Tis no such great ill-fortune: finding grey,
We gladly call that white which might be
black,

'Too used to the double-dye. So, if the 54
priest,

Moved by Pompilia's youth and beauty,
gave

Way to the natural weakness. . . . Anyhow
Here be facts, character; what they spell
Determine, and thence pick what sense
you may!

There was a certain young bold handsome
priest

Popular in the city, far and wide
Famed, since Arezzo's but a little place,
As the best of good companions, gay and
grave

At the decent minute; settled in his stall,
Or sidling, lute on lap, by lady's couch, 60

Ever the courtly Canon; see in him
A proper star to climb and culminate,
Have its due handbreadth of the heaven
at Rome,

Though meanwhile pausing on Arezzo's
edge,
As modest candle does 'mid mountain fog,
To rub off redness and rusticity

Ere it sweep chastened, gain the silver-
sphere!
Whether through Guido's absence or what
else,

This Caponsacchi, favourite of the town,
Was yet no friend of his nor free o' the 70
house,

Though both moved in the regular mag-
nates' march:

Each must observe the other's tread and
halt

At church, saloon, theatre, house of play.
Who could help noticing the husband's
slouch,

The black of his brow — or miss the news
that buzzed

Of how the little solitary wife
Wept and looked out of window all day
long?

What need of minute search into such
springs

As start men, set o' the move? — machin-
ery

Old as earth, obvious as the noonday sun. 80
Why, take men as they come, — an in-
stance now, —

Of all those who have simply gone to see
Pompilia on her deathbed since four days,
Half, at the least are, call it how you please,
In love with her. — I don't except the
priests

Nor even the old confessor whose eyes
run

Over at what he styles his sister's voice

Who died so early and weaned him from
the world.
Well, had they viewed her ere the paleness
pushed
The last o' the red o' the rose away, while
yet
Some hand, adventurous 'twixt the wind
and her,
Might let shy life run back and raise the
flower
Rich with reward up to the guardian's
face, —
Would they have kept that hand employed
all day
At fumbling on with prayer-book pages?
No!
Men are men: why then need I say one
word
10 More than that our mere man the Canon
here
Saw, pitied, loved Pompilia?

This is why;

This startling why: that Caponsacchi's
self —
Whom foes and friends alike avouch, for
good
Or ill, a man of truth whate'er betide,
Intrepid altogether, reckless too
How his own fame and fortune, tossed to
the winds,
Suffer by any turn the adventure take,
Nay, more — not thrusting, like a badge
to hide,
'Twixt shirt and skin a joy which shown
is shame —
20 But flirting flag-like i' the face o' the world
This tell-tale kerchief, this conspicuous
love
For the lady, — oh, called innocent love,
I know!
Only, such scarlet fiery innocence
As most folk would try muffle up in
shade, —
— 'Tis strange then that this else abash-
less mouth
Should yet maintain, for truth's sake which
is God's,
That it was not he made the first advance,
That, even ere word had passed between
the two,
Pompilia penned him letters, passionate
prayers,
o If not love, then so simulating love
That he, no novice to the taste of thyme,
Turned from such over-luscious honey clot
At end o' the flower, and would not lend
his lip
Till . . . but the tale here frankly out-
soars faith:
There must be falsehood somewhere. For
her part,
Pompilia quietly constantly avers
She never penned a letter in her life

Nor to the Canon nor any other man,
Being incompetent to write and read:
Nor had she ever uttered word to him, 40
nor he
To her till that same evening when they
met,
She on her window terrace, he beneath
I' the public street, as was their fateful
chance,
And she adjured him in the name of God
To find out, bring to pass where, when and
how
Escape with him to Rome might be con-
trived.
Means were found, plan laid, time fixed,
she avers,
And heart assured to heart in loyalty,
All at an impulse! All extemporized
As in romance-books! Is that credible? 50
Well, yes: as she avers this with calm
mouth
Dying, I do think "Credible!" you'd cry —
Did not the priest's voice come to break the
spell.
They questioned him apart, as the custom
is,
When first the matter made a noise at Rome,
And he, calm, constant then as she is now,
For truth's sake did assert and re-assert
Those letters called him to her and he
came,
— Which damns the story credible other-
wise.
Why should this man, — mad to devote 60
himself,
Careless what comes of his own fame, the
first, —
Be studious thus to publish and declare
Just what the lightest nature loves to hide,
So screening lady from the byword's laugh
"First spoke the lady, last the cavalier!"
— I say, — why should the man tell truth
just now
When graceful lying meets such ready
shrif?
Or is there a first moment for a priest
As for a woman, when invaded shame
Must have its first and last excuse to show? 70
Do both contrive love's entry in the mind
Shall look, i' the manner of it, a surprise, —
That after, once the flag o' the fort hauled
down,
Effrontery may sink drawbridge, open gate,
Welcome and entertain the conqueror?
Or what do you say to a touch of the devil's
worst?
Can it be that the husband, he who wrote
The letter to his brother I told you of,
I' the name of her it meant to criminate, —
What if he wrote those letters to the priest? 80
Further the priest says, when it first befell,
This follow o' the letters, that he checked
the flow,
Put them back lightly each with its reply.

Here again vexes new discrepancy:
 There never reached her eye a word from
 him:
 He did write but she could not read —
 could just
 Burn the offence to wifehood, womanhood,
 So did burn: never bade him come to her,
 Yet when it proved he must come, let him
 come,
 And when he did come though uncalled, —
 why, spoke
 Prompt by an inspiration: thus it chanced.
 Will you go somewhat back to understand?

- 10 When first, pursuant to his plan, there
 sprang,
 Like an uncaged beast, Guido's cruelty
 On soul and body of his wife, she cried
 To those whom law appoints resource for
 such,
 The secular guardian, — that's the Gov-
 ernor,
 And the Archbishop, — that's the spiritual
 guide,
 And prayed them take the claws from out
 her flesh.
 Now, this is ever the ill consequence
 Of being noble, poor and difficult,
 Ungainly, yet too great to disregard, —
 20 This — that born peers and friends heredi-
 tary, —
 Though disinclined to help from their own
 store
 The opprobrious wight, put penny in his
 poke
 From private purse or leave the door ajar
 When he goes wistful by at dinner-time, —
 Yet, if his needs conduct him where they
 sit
 Smugly in office, judge this, bishop that,
 Dispensers of the shine and shade o' the
 place —
 And if, friend's door shut and friend's purse
 undrawn,
 Still potentates may find the office-seat
 30 Do as good service at no cost — give help
 By-the-bye, pay up traditional dues at once
 Just through a feather-weight too much i'
 the scale,
 Or finger-tip forgot at the balance-tongue, —
 Why, only churls refuse, or Molinists.
 Thus when, in the first roughness of sur-
 prise
 At Guido's wolf-face whence the sheepskin
 fell,
 The frightened couple, all bewilderment,
 Rushed to the Governor, — who else
 rights wrong?
 Told him their tale of wrong and craved
 redress —
 40 Why, then the Governor woke up to the
 fact
 That Guido was a friend of old, poor
 Count! —

So, promptly paid his tribute, promised
 the pair,
 Wholesome chastisement should soon cure
 their qualms.
 Next time they came, wept, prated and
 told lies:
 So stopped all prating, sent them dumb
 to Rome.
 Well, now it was Pompilia's turn to try:
 The troubles pressing on her, as I said,
 Three times she rushed, maddened by
 misery,
 To the other mighty man, sobbed out her
 prayer
 At footstool of the Archbishop — fast the 50
 friend
 Of her husband also! Oh, good friends
 of yore!
 So, the Archbishop, not to be outdone
 By the Governor, break custom more than
 he,
 Thrice bade the foolish woman stop her
 tongue,
 Unloosed her hands from harassing his
 gout,
 Coached her and carried her to the Count
 again,
 — His old friend should be master in his
 house,
 Rule his wife and correct her faults at need!
 Well, driven from post to pillar in this wise,
 She, as a last resource, betook herself 60
 To one, should be no family-friend at
 least,
 A simple friar o' the city; confessed to him,
 Then told how fierce temptation of release
 By self-dealt death was busy with her soul,
 And urged that he put this in words, write
 plain
 For one who could not write, set down her
 prayer
 That Pietro and Violante, parent-like
 If somehow not her parents, should for love
 Come save her, pluck from out the flame
 the brand
 Themselves had thoughtlessly thrust in so 70
 deep
 To send gay-coloured sparkles up and
 cheer
 Their seat at the chimney-corner. The
 good friar
 Promised as much at the moment; but,
 alack,
 Night brings discretion: he was no one's
 friend,
 Yet presently found he could not turn about
 Nor take a step i' the case and fail to tread
 On someone's toe who either was a friend,
 Or a friend's friend, or friend's friend
 thrice-removed,
 And woe to friar by whom offences come!
 So, the course being plain, — with a 80
 general sigh
 At matrimony the profound mistake, —

He threw reluctantly the business up,
Having his other penitents to mind.

If then, all outlets thus secured save one,
At last she took to the open, stood and
stared

With her wan face to see where God might
wait —

And there found Caponsacchi wait as well
For the precious something at perdition's
edge,

He only was predestinate to save, —

And if they recognized in a critical flash
10 From the zenith, each the other, her need
of him,

His need of . . . say, a woman to perish
for,

The regular way o' the world, yet break no
vow,

Do no harm save to himself, — if this were
thus?

How do you say? It were improbable;
So is the legend of my patron-saint.

Anyhow, whether, as Guido states the case,
Pompilia, — like a starving wretch i' the
street

Who stops and rifles the first passenger

In the great right of an excessive wrong, —
20 Did somehow call this stranger and he
came, —

Or whether the strange sudden interview
Blazed as when star and star must needs
go close

Till each hurts each and there is loss in
heaven —

Whatever way in this strange world it
was, —

Pompilia and Caponsacchi met, in fine,
She at her window, he i' the street beneath,
And understood each other at first look.

All was determined and performed at once.
And on a certain April evening, late

30 I' the month, this girl of sixteen, bride and
wife

Three years and over, — she who hitherto
Had never taken twenty steps in Rome
Beyond the church, pinned to her mother's
gown,

Nor, in Arezzo, knew her way through
street

Except what led to the Archbishop's door, —
Such an one rose up in the dark, laid hand
On what came first, clothes and a trinket
or two,

Belongings of her own in the old day, —
Stole from the side o' the sleeping spouse —
who knows?

40 Sleeping perhaps, silent for certain, — slid
Ghost-like from great dark room to great
dark room

In through the tapestries and out again
And onward, uncmbarrassed as a fate,

Descended staircase, gained last door of all,
Sent it wide open at first push of palm,
And there stood, first time, last and only
time,

At liberty, alone in the open street, —
Unquestioned, unmolested found herself
At the city gate, by Caponsacchi's side,
Hope there, joy there, life and all good 50
again,

The carriage there, the convoy there, light
there

Broadening ever into blaze at Rome
And breaking small what long miles lay
between;

Up she sprang, in he followed, they were
safe.

The husband quotes this for incredible,
All of the story from first word to last:

Seized the priest's hand throughout up-
holding hers,

Traces his foot to the alcove, that night,
Whither and whence blindfold he knew the
way,

Proficient in all craft and stealthiness; 60
And cites for proof a servant, eye that
watched

And ear that opened to purse secrets up,
A woman-spy, — suborned to give and
take

Letters and tokens, do the work of shame
The more adroitly that herself, who helped
Communion thus between a tainted pair,
Had long since been a leper thick in spot,
A common trull o' the town: she witnessed
all,

Helped many meetings, partings, took her
wage

And then told Guido the whole matter. 70
Lies!

The woman's life confutes her word, —
her word
Confutes itself: "Thus, thus and thus I
lied."

"And thus, no question, still you lie," we
say.

"Ay, but at last, e'en have it how you
will,

"Whatever the means whatever the way,
explodes

"The consummation" — the accusers
shriek:

"Here is the wife avowedly found in flight,
"And the companion of her flight, a priest;
"She flies her husband, he the church his
spouse:

"What is this?"

80

Wife and priest alike reply
"This is the simple thing it claims to be,
"A course we took for life and honour's
sake,
"Very strange, very justifiable."

- She says, "God put it in my head to fly,
 "As when the martin migrates: autumn
 claps
 "Her hands, cries 'Winter's coming, will
 be here,
 "'Off with you ere the white teeth over-
 take!
 "'Flee!' So I fled: this friend was the
 warm day,
 "The south wind and whatever favours
 flight;
 "I took the favour, had the help, how else?
 "And so we did fly rapidly all night,
 "All day, all night — a longer night —
 again,
 10 "And then another day, longest of days,
 "And all the while, whether we fled or
 stopped,
 "I scarce know how or why, one thought
 filled both,
 "'Fly and arrive!' So long as I found
 strength
 "I talked with my companion, told him
 much,
 "Knowing that he knew more, knew me,
 knew God
 "And God's disposal of me, — but the
 sense
 "O' the blessed flight absorbed me in the
 main,
 "And speech became mere talking through
 a sleep,
 "Till at the end of that last longest night
 20 "In a red daybreak, when we reached
 an inn
 "And my companion whispered 'Next
 stage — Rome!'
 "Sudden the weak flesh fell like piled-up
 cards,
 "All the frail fabric at a finger's touch,
 "And prostrate the poor soul, too, and I said
 "But though Count Guido were a furlong
 off,
 "Just on me, I must stop and rest awhile!
 "Then something like a huge white wave
 o' the sea
 "Broke o'er my brain and buried me in
 sleep
 "Blessedly, till it ebbed and left me loose,
 30 "And where was I found but on a strange
 bed
 "In a strange room like hell, roaring with
 noise,
 "Ruddy with flame, and filled with men,
 in front
 "Who but the man you call my husband?
 ay —
 "Count Guido once more between heaven
 and me,
 "For there my heaven stood, my salvation,
 yes —
 "That Caponsacchi all my heaven of help,
 "Helpless himself, held prisoner in the
 hands
- "Of men who looked up in my husband's
 face
 "To take the fate thence he should signify,
 "Just as the way was at Arezzo. Then, 40
 "Not for my sake but his who had helped
 me —
 "I sprang up, reached him with one bound,
 and seized
 "The sword o' the felon, trembling at his
 side,
 "Fit creature of a coward, unsheathed the
 thing
 "And would have pinned him through the
 poison-bag
 "To the wall and left him there to palpi-
 tate,
 "As you serve scorpions, but men inter-
 posed —
 "Disarmed me, gave his life to him again
 "That he might take mine and the other
 lives,
 "And he has done so. I submit myself!" 50
 The priest says — oh, and in the main
 result
 The facts asseverate, he truly says,
 As to the very act and deed of him,
 However you mistrust the mind o' the
 man —
 The flight was just for flight's sake, no
 pretext
 For aught except to set Pompilia free.
 He says "I cite the husband's self's worst
 charge
 "In proof of my best word for both of us.
 "Be it conceded that so many times
 "We took our pleasure in his palace: then, 60
 "What need to fly at all? — or flying no
 less,
 "What need to outrage the lips sick and
 white
 "Of a woman, and bring ruin down beside,
 "By halting when Rome lay one stage
 beyond?"
 So does he vindicate Pompilia's fame,
 Confirm her story in all points but one —
 This; that, so fleeing and so breathing
 forth
 Her last strength in the prayer to halt
 awhile,
 She makes confusion of the reddening white
 Which was the sunset when her strength 70
 gave way,
 And the next sunrise and its whitening
 red
 Which she revived in when her husband
 came:
 She mixes both times, morn and eve, in
 one,
 Having lived through a blank of night
 'twixt each
 Though dead-asleep, unaware as a corpse,
 She on the bed above; her friend below
 Watched in the doorway of the inn the
 while,

Stood i' the red o' the morn, that she mistakes,
In act to rouse and quicken the tardy crew
And hurry out the horses, have the stage
Over, the last league, reach Rome and be safe:
When up came Guido.

Guido's tale begins —

How he and his whole household, drunk to death

By some enchanted potion, poppied drugs
Piled by the wife, lay powerless in gross sleep

And left the spoilers unimpeded way,

10 Could not shake off their poison and pursue,

Till noontide, then made shift to get on horse

And did pursue: which means he took his time,

Pressed on no more than lingered after, step

By step, just making sure o' the fugitives,
Till at the nick of time, he saw his chance,
Seized it, came up with and surprised the pair.

How he must needs have gnawn lip and gnashed teeth,

Taking successively at tower and town,
Village and roadside, still the same report

20 "Yes, such a pair arrived an hour ago,
"Sat in the carriage just where now you stand,

"While we got horses ready, — turned deaf ear
"To all entreaty they would even alight;
"Counted the minutes and resumed their course."

Would they indeed escape, arrive at Rome,
Leave no least loop-hole to let murder through,

But foil him of his captured infamy,
Prize of guilt proved and perfect? So it seemed.

Till, oh the happy chance, at last stage, Rome

30 But two short hours off, Castelnuovo reached,

The guardian angel gave reluctant place,
Satan stepped forward with alacrity,
Pompilia's flesh and blood succumbed, perforce

A halt was, and her husband had his will.
Perdue he couched, counted out hour by hour

Till he should spy in the east a signal-streak —
Night had been, morrow was, triumph would be.

Do you see the plan deliciously complete?
The rush upon the unsuspecting sleep,

40 The easy execution, the outcry
Over the deed "Take notice all the world!

"These two dead bodies, locked still in embrace, —

"The man is Caponsacchi and a priest,
"The woman is my wife: they fled me late,

"Thus have I found and you behold them thus,

"And may judge me: do you approve or no?"

Success did seem not so improbable,
But that already Satan's laugh was heard,
His black back turned on Guido — left i' the lurch

Or rather, balked of suit and service now, 50
Left to improve on both by one deed more,
Burn up the better at no distant day,
Body and soul one holocaust to hell.

Anyhow, of this natural consequence
Did just the last link of the long chain snap:

For an eruption was o' the priest, alive
And alert, calm, resolute and formidable,
Not the least look of fear in that broad brow —

One not to be disposed of by surprise,
And armed moreover — who had guessed 60
as much?

Yes, there stood he in secular costume
Complete from head to heel, with sword at side,

He seemed to know the trick of perfectly.
There was no prompt suppression of the man

As he said calmly "I have saved your wife
"From death; there was no other way but this;

"Of what do I defraud you except death?
"Charge any wrong beyond, I answer it."

Guido, the valorous, had met his match,
Was forced to demand help instead of fight, 70

Bid the authorities o' the place lend aid
And make the best of a broken matter so.
They soon obeyed the summons — I suppose,

Apprised and ready, or not far to seek —
Laid hands on Caponsacchi, found in fault,

A priest yet flagrantly accoutred thus, —
Then, to make good Count Guido's further charge,

Proceeded, prisoner made lead the way,
In a crowd, upstairs to the chamber-door
Where wax-white, dead asleep, deep be- 80
yond dream,

As the priest laid her, lay Pompilia yet.
And as he mounted step and step with the crowd

How I see Guido taking heart again!
He knew his wife so well and the way of her —

How at the outbreak she would shroud her shame

In hell's heart, would it mercifully yawn —
 How, failing that, her forehead to his
 foot
 She would crouch silent till the great doom
 fell,
 Leave him triumphant with the crowd to
 see
 Guilt motionless or writhing like a worm!
 No! Second misadventure, this worm
 turned,
 I told you: would have slain him on the
 spot
 With his own weapon, but they seized her
 hands:
 Leaving her tongue free, as it tolled the
 knell
 10 Of Guido's hope so lively late. The past
 Took quite another shape now. She who
 shrieked
 "At least and for ever I am mine and
 God's,
 "Thanks to his liberating angel Death —
 "Never again degraded to be yours
 "The ignoble noble, the unmanly man,
 "The beast below the beast in brutish-
 ness!"
 This was the froward child, "the restif
 lamb
 "Used to be cherished in his breast," he
 groaned —
 "Eat from his hand and drink from out his
 cup,
 20 "The while his fingers pushed their loving
 way
 "Through curl on curl of that soft coat —
 alas,
 "And she all silverly baaced gratitude
 "While meditating mischief!" — and so
 forth.
 He must invent another story now!
 The ins and outs o' the rooms were
 searched: he found
 Or showed for found the abominable
 prize —
 Love-letters from his wife who cannot
 write,
 Love-letters in reply o' the priest — thank
 God! —
 Who can write and confront his character
 30 With this, and prove the false thing forged
 throughout:
 Spitting whereat, he needs must spatter
 whom
 But Guido's self? — that forged and falsi-
 fied
 One letter called Pompilia's, past dispute:
 Then why not these to make sure still
 more sure?
 So was the case concluded then and there:
 Guido preferred his charges in due form,
 Called on the law to adjudicate, consigned
 The accused ones to the Prefect of the
 place

(Oh mouse-birth of that mountain like
 revenge!)
 And so to his own place betook himself 44
 After the spring that failed, — the wild-
 cat's way.
 The captured parties were conveyed to
 Rome;
 Investigation followed here i' the court —
 Soon to review the fruit of its own work,
 From then to now being eight months and
 no more.
 Guido kept out of sight and safe at home:
 The Abate, brother Paolo, helped most
 At words when deeds were out of question,
 pushed
 Nearest the purple,¹ best played deputy,
 So, pleaded, Guido's representative 50
 At the court shall soon try Guido's self, —
 what's more,
 The court that also took — I told you,
 Sir —
 That statement of the couple, how a cheat
 Had been i' the birth of the babe, no child
 of theirs.
 That was the prelude; this, the play's
 first act:
 Whereof we wait what comes, crown, close
 of all.
 Well, the result was something of a shade
 On the parties thus accused, — how other-
 wise?
 Shade, but with shine as unmistakable.
 Each had a prompt defence: Pompilia 60
 first —
 "Earth was made hell to me who did no
 harm:
 "I only could emerge one way from hell
 "By catching at the one hand held me, so
 "I caught at it and thereby stepped to
 heaven:
 "If that be wrong, do with me what you
 will!"
 Then Caponsacchi with a grave grand
 sweep
 O' the arm as though his soul warned base-
 ness off —
 "If as a man, then much more as a priest
 "I hold me bound to help weak innocence:
 "If so my worldly reputation burst, 74
 "Being the bubble it is, why, burst it may:
 "Blame I can bear though not blame-
 worthiness.
 "But use your sense first, see if the mis-
 creant proved,
 "The man who tortured thus the woman,
 thus
 "Have not both laid the trap and fixed the
 lure
 "Over the pit should bury body and soul!
 "His facts are lies: his letters are the fact —
 "An infiltration flavoured with himself!

¹ The purple: the colour of the cardinals.

"As for the fancies — whether . . . what is it you say?

"The lady loves me, whether I love her

"In the forbidden sense of your surmise, —

"If, with the midday blaze of truth above,

"The unblinded eye of God awake, aware,

"You needs must pry about and trace the birth

"Of each stray beam of light may traverse night,

"To the night's sun that's Lucifer himself,

"Do so, at other time, in other place

10 "Not now, nor here! Enough that first to last

"I never touched her lip nor she my hand,

"Nor either of us thought a thought, much less

"Spoke a word which the Virgin might not hear.

"Be such your question, thus I answer it."

Then the court had to make its mind up, spoke.

"It is a thorny question, yea, a tale

"Hard to believe, but not impossible:

"Who can be absolute for either side?

"A middle course is happily open yet.

20 "Here has a blot surprised the social blank, —

"Whether through favour, feebleness or fault,

"No matter, leprosy has touched our robe

"And we unclean must needs be purified.

"Here is a wife makes holiday from home,

"A priest caught playing truant to his church

"In masquerade moreover: both allege

"Enough excuse to stop our lifted scourge

"Which else would heavily fall. On the other hand,

"Here is a husband, ay and man of mark,

30 "Who comes complaining here, demands redress

"As if he were the pattern of desert —

"The while those plaguy allegations frown,

"Forbid we grant him the redress he seeks.

"To all men be our moderation known!

"Rewarding none while compensating each,

"Hurting all round though harming nobody,

"Husband, wife, priest, scot-free not one shall 'scape,

"Yet priest, wife, husband, boast the unbroken head

"From application of our excellent oil:

40 "So that, whatever be the fact, in fine,

"We make no miss of justice in a sort.

"First, let the husband stomach as he may,

"His wife shall neither be returned him, no —

"Nor branded, whipped and caged, but just consigned

"To a convent and the quietude she craves;
"So is he rid of his domestic plague:

"What better thing can happen to a man?

"Next, let the priest retire — unshent, unshamed,

"Unpunished as for perpetrating crime,

"But relegated (not imprisoned, Sirs!) 50

"Sent for three years to clarify his youth

"At Civita, a rest by the way to Rome:

"There let his life skim off its last of lees

"Nor keep this dubious colour. Judged the cause:

"All parties may retire, content, we hope."

That's Rome's way, the traditional road of law;

Whither it leads is what remains to tell.

The priest went to his relegation-place,

The wife to her convent, brother Paolo

To the arms of brother Guido with the 60 news

And this beside — his charge was counter-charged;

The Comparini, his old brace of hates,

Were breathed and vigilant and venomous now —

Had shot a second bolt where the first stuck,

And followed up the pending dowry-suit

By a procedure should release the wife

From so much of the marriage-bond as barred

Escape when Guido turned the screw too much

On his wife's flesh and blood, as husband may.

No more defence, she turned and made 70 attack,

Claimed now divorce from bed and board, in short:

Pleaded such subtle strokes of cruelty,

Such slow sure siege laid to her body and soul,

As, proved, — and proofs seemed coming thick and fast, —

Would gain both freedom and the dowry back

Even should the first suit leave them in his grasp:

So urged the Comparini for the wife.

Guido had gained not one of the good things

He grasped at by his creditable plan

O' the flight and following and the rest: 80 the suit

That smouldered late was fanned to fury new,

This adjunct came to help with fiercer fire,

While he had got himself a quite new plague —

Found the world's face an universal grin

At this last best of the Hundred Merry Tales¹

Of how a young and spritely clerk devised
To carry off a spouse that moped too
much,

And cured her of the vapours in a trice:
And how the husband, playing Vulcan's
part,²

Told by the Sun, started in hot pursuit
To catch the lovers, and came halting up,
Cast his net and then called the Gods to
see

The convicts in their rosy impudence —
10 Whereat said Mercury "Would that I
were Mars!"

Oh it was rare, and naughty all the same!
Brief, the wife's courage and cunning, —
the priest's show

Of chivalry and adroitness, — last not
least,

The husband — how he ne'er showed teeth
at all,

Whose bark had promised biting; but
just sneaked

Back to his kennel, tail 'twixt legs, as
'twere, —

All this was hard to gulp down and digest.
So pays the devil his liegeman, brass for
gold.

But this was at Arezzo: here in Rome

6 Brave Paolo bore up against it all —
Battled it out, nor wanting to himself
Nor Guido nor the House whose weight
he bore

Pillar-like, by no force of arm but brain.

He knew his Rome, what wheels to set to
work;

Plied influential folk, pressed to the ear
Of the efficacious purple, pushed his way
To the old Pope's self, — past decency
indeed, —

Praying him take the matter in his hands
Out of the regular court's incompetence.

30 But times are changed and nephews out
of date

And favouritism unfashionable: the Pope
Said "Render Cæsar what is Cæsar's due!"

As for the Comparini's counter-plea,
He met that by a counter-plea again,
Made Guido claim divorce — with help so
far

By the trial's issue: for, why punishment
However slight unless for guiltiness

However slender? — and a molehill serves
Much as a mountain of offence this
way.

¹ *The Hundred Merry Tales*: referring to the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, in which ten tales are told on each of ten days, many of them of the type described in the next lines.

² *Vulcan's part*: referring to Homer (*Od.* viii. 266 ff.), where Hephestus (Vulcan) is deceived by Aphrodite (Venus), his wife, and Ares (Mars), her lover.

So was he gathering strength on every 40
side

And growing more and more to menace —
when

All of a terrible moment came the blow
That beat down Paolo's fence, ended the
play

O' the foil and brought mannaia on the
stage.

Five months had passed now since Pom-
pilia's flight,

Months spent in peace among the Convert
nuns.

This, — being, as it seemed, for Guido's
sake

Solely, what pride might call imprison-
ment

And quote as something gained, to friends
at home, —

This naturally was at Guido's charge: 50
Grudge it he might, but penitential fare,

Prayers, preachings, who but he defrayed
the cost?

So, Paolo dropped, as proxy, do it by do it
Like heart's blood, till — what's here?
What notice comes?

The convent's self makes application bland
That, since Pompilia's health is fast o' the
wane,

She may have leave to go combine her cure
Of soul with cure of body, mend her mind
Together with her thin arms and sunk
eyes

That want fresh air outside the convent- 60
wall,

Say in a friendly house, — and which so
fit

As a certain villa in the Pauline way,
That happens to hold Pietro and his wife,
The natural guardians? "Oh, and shift
the care

"You shift the cost, too; Pietro pays in
turn,

"And lightens Guido of a load! And then,
"Villa or convent, two names for one
thing,

"Always the sojourn means imprison-
ment,

"*Domus pro carcere*³ — nowise we relax,
"Nothing abate: how answers Paolo?" 70

You,

What would you answer? All so smooth
and fair,

Even Paul's astuteness sniffed no harm i'
the world.

He authorised the transfer, saw it made
And, two months after, reaped the fruit of
the same,

Having to sit down, rack his brain and find

³ *Domus pro carcere*: "a house in place of a prison."

What phrase should serve him best to
notify

Our Guido that by happy providence
A son and heir, a babe was born to him
I' the villa, — go! tell sympathising
friends!

Yes, such had been Pompilia's privilege:
She, when she fled, was one month gone
with child,

Known to herself or unknown, either way
Availing to explain (say men of art)

10 The strange and passionate precipitance
Of maiden startled into motherhood
Which changes body and soul by nature's
law.

So when the she-dove breeds, strange
yearnings come

For the unknown shelter by undreamed-
of shores,

And there is born a blood-pulse in her
heart

To fight if needs be, though with flap of
wing,

For the wool-flock or the fur-tuft, though
a hawk

Contest the prize, — wherefore, she knows
not yet.

Anyhow, thus to Guido came the news.

"I shall have quitted Rome ere you ar-
rive

20 "To take the one step left," — wrote
Paolo.

Then did the winch o' the winepress of all
hate,

Vanity, disappointment, grudge and greed,
Take the last turn that screws out pure
revenge

With a bright bubble at the brim beside —
By an heir's birth he was assured at
once

O' the main prize, all the money in dispute:
Pompilia's dowry might revert to her

Or stay with him as law's caprice should
point, —

But now — now — what was Pietro's
shall be hers,

30 What was hers shall remain her own, —
if hers,

Why then, — oh, not her husband's but —
her heir's!

That heir being his too, all grew his at last
By this road or by that road, since they
join.

Before, why, push he Pietro out o' the
world, —

The current of the money stopped, you see,
Pompilia being proved no Pietro's child.

Or let it be Pompilia's life he quenched,
Again the current of the money stopped, —

40 Guido debarred his rights as husband soon,
So the new process threatened; — now, the
chance,

Now, the resplendent minute! Clear the
earth,

Cleanse the house, let the three but dis-
appear

A child remains, depositary of all,
That Guido may enjoy his own again,
Repair all losses by a master-stroke,
Wipe out the past, all done all left undone,
Swell the good present to best evermore,
Die into new life, which let blood baptize!

So, i' the blue of a sudden sulphur-blaze,
Both why there was one step to take at 50
Rome,

And why he should not meet with Paolo
there,

He saw — the ins and outs to the heart of
hell —

And took the straight line thither swift and
sure.

He rushed to Vittiano, found four sons o'
the soil,

Brutes of his breeding, with one spark i'
the clod

That served for a scul; the looking up to
him

Or aught called Franceschini as life,
death,

Heaven, hell, — lord paramount, as-
sembled these,

Harangued, equipped, instructed, pressed
each clod

With his will's imprint; then took horse, 60
plied spur,

And so arrived, all five of them, at Rome
On Christmas-Eve, and forthwith found
themselves

Installed i' the vacancy and solitude
Left them by Paolo, the considerate

man

Who, good as his word, had disappeared at
once

As if to leave the stage free. A whole
week

Did Guido spend in study of his part,
Then played it fearless of a failure. One,

Struck the year's clock whereof the hours
are days,

And off was rung o' the little wheels the 70
chime

"Good will on earth and peace to man:"
but, two,

Proceeded the same bell and, evening
come,

The dreadful five felt finger-wise their
way

Across the town by blind cuts and black
turns

To the little lone suburban villa; knocked —
"Who may be outside?" called a well-

known voice.

"A friend of Caponsacchi's bringing
friends

"A letter."
That's a test, the excusers say:
Ay, and a test conclusive, I return.

What? Had that name brought touch of
guilt or taste
Of fear with it, ought to dash the present
joy
With memory of the sorrow just at end, —
She, happy in her parents' arms at length
With the new blessing of the two weeks'
babe, —
How had that name's announcement
moved the wife?
Or, as the other slanders circulate,
Were Caponsacchi no rare visitant
On nights and days whither safe harbour
lured,
What bait had been i' the name to ope the
door?
The promise of a letter? Stealthy guests
Have secret watchwords, private entrances:
The man's own self might have been found
inside
And all the scheme made frustrate by a
word.
No: but since Guido knew, none knew so
well,
The man had never since returned to
Rome
Nor seen the wife's face more than villa's
front,
So, could not be at hand to warn or save, —
For that, he took this sure way to the end.
"Come in," bade poor Violante cheerfully,
Drawing the door-bolt: that death was the
first,
Stabbed through and through. Pietro,
close on her heels,
Set up a cry — "Let me confess myself!
"Grant but confession!" Cold steel was
the grant.
Then came Pompilia's turn.
Then they escaped.
The noise o' the slaughter roused the neigh-
bourhood.
They had forgotten just the one thing more
Which saves i' the circumstance, the ticket,
to-wit,
Which puts post-horses at a traveller's use:
So, all on foot, desperate through the dark
Reeled they like drunkards along open
road,
Accomplished a prodigious twenty miles
Homeward, and gained Baccano very near,
Stumbled at last, deaf, dumb, blind
through the feat,
Into a grange and, one dead heap, slept
there
Till the pursuers hard upon their trace
Reached them and took them, red from
head to heel,
And brought them to the prison where they
lie.
The couple were laid i' the church two
days ago,
And the wife lives yet by miracle

All is told.
You hardly need ask what Count Guido
says,
Since something he must say. "I own
the deed —"
(He cannot choose, — but —) "I declare
the same
"Just and inevitable, — since no way
else
"Was left me, but by this of taking life,
"To save my honour which is more than
life.
"I exercised a husband's rights." To
which
The answer is as prompt — "There was
no fault
"In any one o' the three to punish thus:
"Neither i' the wife, who kept all faith to 5
you,
"Nor in the parents, whom yourself first
duped,
"Robbed and maltreated, then turned
out of doors.
"You wronged and they endured wrong;
yours the fault.
"Next, had endurance overpassed the mark
"And turned resentment needing reme-
dy, —
"Nay, put the absurd impossible case, for
once —
"You were all blameless of the blame
alleged
"And they blameworthy where you fix all
blame,
"Still, why this violation of the law?
"Yourself elected law should take its 6
course,
"Avenge wrong, or show vengeance not
your right;
"Why, only when the balance in law's
hand
"Trembles against you and inclines the
way
"O' the other party, do you make protest,
"Renounce arbitrament, flying out of
court,
"And crying 'Honour's hurt the sword
must cure'?
"Aha, and so i' the middle of each suit
"Trying i' the courts, — and you had
three in play
"With an appeal to the Pope's self be-
side, —
"What, you may chop and change and 7
right your wrongs,
"Leaving the law to lag as she thinks fit?"

That were too temptingly commodious,
Count!

One would have still a remedy in reserve
Should reach the safest oldest sinner, you
see!

One's honour forsooth? Does that take
hurt alone

From the extreme outrage? I who have
no wife,
Being yet sensitive in my degree
As Guido, — must discover hurt elsewhere
Which, half compounded-for in days gone
by,
May profitably break out now afresh,
Need cure from my own expeditious hands.
The lie that was, as it were, imputed me
When you objected to my contract's
clause, —
The theft as good as, one may say, al-
leged,
10 When you, co-heir in a will, excepted, Sir,
To my administration of effects,
— Aha, do you think law disposed of these?
My honour's touched and shall deal death
around!
Count, that were too commodious, I
repeat!
If any law be imperative on us all,
Of all are you the enemy: out with you
From the common light and air and life
of man!

IV.—TERTIUM QUID.

TRUE, Excellency — as his Highness says,
Though she's not dead yet, she's as good
as stretched
20 Symmetrical beside the other two;
Though he's not judged yet, he's the same
as judged,
So do the facts abound and superabound:
And nothing hinders that we lift the case
Out of the shade into the shine, allow
Qualified persons to pronounce at last,
Nay, edge in an authoritative word
Between this rabble's-brabble of dolts and
fools
Who make up reasonless unreasoning
Rome.
"Now for the Trial!" they roar: "the
Trial to test
30 "The truth, weigh husband and weigh
wife alike
"I' the scales of law, make one scale kick
the beam!"
Law's a machine from which, to please the
mob,
Truth the divinity must needs descend
And clear things at the play's fifth act —
aha!
Hammer into their noddles who was who
And what was what. I tell the simpletons
"Could law be competent to such a feat
"Twere done already: what begins next
week
"Is end o' the Trial, last link of a chain
40 "Whereof the first was forged three years
ago
"When law addressed herself to set wrong
right,

"And proved so slow in taking the first
step
"That ever some new grievance, — tort,
retort,
"On one or the other side, — o'ertook i'
the game,
"Retarded sentence, till this deed of
death
"Is thrown in, as it were, las. bale to boat
"Crammed to the edge with cargo — or
passengers?
"Trecentos inseris: ¹ ohe, jam satis est!
"Huc appelle!" — passengers, the word
must be."
Long since, the boat was loaded to my
eyes.
To hear the rabble and brabble, you'd call
the case
Fused and confused past human finding
out.
One calls the square round, t'other the
round square —
And pardonably in that first surprise
O' the blood that fell and splashed the
diagram:
But now we've used our eyes to the violent
hue
Can't we look through the crimson and
trace lines?
It makes a man despair of history,
Eusebius and the established fact — fig's
end!
Oh, give the fools their Trial, rattle away
With the leash of lawyers, two on either
side —
One barks, one bites, — Masters Arcan-
geli
And Spreti, — that's the husband's ul-
timate hope
Against the Fisc and the other kind of Fisc,
Bound to do barking for the wife: bow —
wow!
Why, Excellency, we and his Highness
here
Would settle the matter as sufficiently
As ever will Advocate This and Fiscal That
And Judge the Other, with even — a word
and a wink —
We well know who for ultimate arbiter.
Let us beware o' the basset-table ² — lest
We jog the elbow of Her Eminence, ³
Jostle his cards, — he'll rap you out
a . . . st!
By the window-seat! And here's the
Marquis too!
Indulge me but a moment: if I fail

¹ *Trecentos inseris*, &c.: Horace, *Sat.* I. 5. 12.

² *Basset*: a game of cards, fashionable in the seventeenth century.

³ *Her Eminence*: an imitation of the Italian idiom, in which "His Eminence," as we should say, becomes "*Sua Eminenza*." Browning uses this idiom occasionally in the present book (*g.g.*, p. 726, ll. 65, 67), but not regularly.

— Favoured with such an audience,
understand! —
To set things right, why, class me with the
mob
As understander of the mind of man!

The mob, — now, that's just how the
error comes!
Bethink you that you have to deal with
plebs,
The commonalty; this is an episode
In burgess-life, — why seek to aggrandise,
Idealise, denaturalise the class?
People talk, just as if they had to do
With a noble pair that . . . Excellency,
your ear!
Stoop to me, Highness, — listen and look
yourselves!
This Pietro, this Violante, live their life
At Rome in the easy way that's far from
worst
Even for their betters, — themselves love
themselves,
Spend their own oil in feeding their own
lamp
That their own faces may grow bright
thereby.
They get to fifty and over: how's the
lamp?
Full to the depth o' the wick, — moneys so
much;
And also with a remnant, — so much
more
Of moneys, — which there's no consuming
now,
But, when the wick shall moulder out
some day,
Failing fresh twist of tow to use up
dregs,
Will lie a prize for the passer-by, — to-wit
Anyone that can prove himself the heir,
Seeing, the couple are wanting in a child:
Meantime their wick swims in the safe
broad bowl
O' the middle rank, — not raised a
beacon's height
For wind to ravage, nor dropped till lamp
graze ground
Like cresset, mudlarks poke now here
now there,
Going their rounds to probe the ruts i' the
road
Or fish the luck o' the puddle. Pietro's
soul
Was satisfied when cronies smirked, "No
wine
Like Pietro's, and he drinks it every
day!"
His wife's heart sweiled her boddice,
joyed its fill
When neighbours turned heads wistfully
at church,
Sighed at the load of lace that came to
pray.

Well, having got through fifty years of
flare,
They burn out so, indulge so their dear
selves,
That Pietro finds himself in debt at last,
As he were any lordling of us all: 40
And, now that dark begins to creep on day,
Creditors grow uneasy, talk aside,
Take counsel, then importune all at once.
For if the good fat rosy careless man,
Who has not laid a ducat by, decease —
Let the lamp fall, no heir at hand to
catch —
Why, being childless, there's a spilth i' the
street
O' the remnant, there's a scramble for the
dregs
By the stranger: so, they grant him no long
day
But come in a body, clamour to be paid. 50

What's his resource? He asks and
straight obtains
The customary largess, dole dealt out
To, what we call our "poor dear shame-
faced ones,"
In secret once a month to spare the shame
O' the slothful and the spendthrift, —
pauper-saints
The Pope puts meat i' the mouth of, ravens
they,
And providence he — just what the mob
admires!
That is, instead of putting a prompt foot
On selfish worthless human slugs whose
slime
Has failed to lubricate their path in life, 60
Why, the Pope picks the first ripe fruit
that falls
And gracious puts it in the vermin's way.
Pietro could never save a dollar? Straight
He must be subsidised at our expense:
And for his wife — the harmless house-
hold sheep
One ought not to see harassed in her age —
Judge, by the way she bore adversity,
O' the patient nature you ask pity for!
How long, now, would the roughest
marketman,
Handling the creatures huddled to the 70
knife,
Harass a mutton ere she made a mouth
Or menaced biting? Yet the poor sheep
here,
Violante, the old innocent burgess-wife,
In her first difficulty showed great teeth
Fit to crunch up and swallow a good round
crime.
She meditates the tenure of the Trust,
Fidei commissum is the lawyer-phrase,
These funds that only want an heir to
take —
Goes o'er the gamut o' the creditor's cry

By semitones from whine to snarl high up
 And growl down low, one scale in sundry
 keys, —
 Pauses with a little compunction for the face
 Of Pietro frustrate of its ancient cheer, —
 Never a bottle now for friend at need, —
 Comes to a stop on her own frittered lace
 And neighbourly condolences thereat,
 Then makes her mind up, sees the thing
 to do:
 And so, deliberate, snaps house-book
 clasp,
 to Posts off to vespers, missal beneath arm,
 Passes the proper San Lorenzo by,
 Dives down a little lane to the left, is lost
 In a labyrinth of dwellings best unnamed,
 Selects a certain blind one, black at base,
 Blinking at top, — the sign of we know
 what, —
 One candle in a casement set to wink
 Streetward, do service to no shrine in-
 side, —
 Mounts thither by the filthy flight of stairs,
 Holding the cord by the wall, to the tip-
 top,
 to Gropes for the door i' the dark, ajar of
 course,
 Raps, opens, enters in: up starts a thing
 Naked as needs be — "What, you rogue,
 'tis you?"
 "Back, — how can I have taken a farthing
 yet?"
 "Mercy on me, poor sinner that I am!
 "Here's . . . why, I took you for Ma-
 donna's self
 "With all that sudden swirl of silk i' the
 place!
 "What may your pleasure be, my bonny
 dame?"
 Your Excellency supplies aught left ob-
 scure?
 One of those women that abound in Rome,
 30 Whose needs oblige them eke out one poor
 trade
 By another vile one: her ostensible work
 Was washing clothes, out in the open air
 At the cistern by Citorio; her true trade —
 Whispering to idlers, when they stopped
 and praised
 The ankles she let liberally shine
 In kneeling at the slab by the fountain-
 side,
 That there was plenty more to criticise
 At home, that eve, i' the house where
 candle blinked
 Decorously above, and all was done
 40 I' the holy fear of God and cheap beside.
 Violante, now, had seen this woman wash,
 Noticed and envied her propitious shape,
 Tracked her home to her house-top, noted
 too,
 And now was come to tempt her and pro-
 pose

A bargain far more shameful than the first
 Which trafficked her virginity away
 For a melon and three pauls at twelve
 years old.
 Five minutes' talk with this poor child of
 Eve,
 Struck was the bargain, business at an
 end —
 "Then, six months hence, that person
 whom you trust,
 "Comes, fetches whatsoever babe it be
 "I keep the price and secret, you the
 babe,
 "Paying beside for mass to make all
 straight:
 "Meantime, I pouch the earnest-money-
 piece."
 Down stairs again goes fumbling by the
 rope
 Violante, triumphing in a flourish of fire
 From her own brain, self-lit by such suc-
 cess, —
 Gains church in time for the "*Magnificat*"
 And gives forth "My reproof is taken
 away,
 "And blessed shall mankind proclaim me
 now,"
 So that the officiating priest turns round
 To see who proffers the obstreperous
 praise:
 Then home to Pietro, the enraptured
 much
 But puzzled-more when told the wondrous
 news —
 How orisons and works of charity,
 (Beside that pair of pinners and a coif,
 Birth-day surprise last Wednesday was
 five weeks)
 Had borne fruit in the autumn of his life, —
 They, or the Orvioto in a double dose.
 Anyhow, she must keep house next six
 months,
 Lie on the settle, avoid the three-legged
 stool,
 And, chiefly, not be crossed in wish or
 whim,
 And the result was like to be an heir.
 Accordingly, when time was come about,
 He found himself the sire indeed of this
 Francesca Vittoria Pompilia and the rest
 O' the names whereby he sealed her his,
 next day.
 A crime complete in its way is here, I
 hope?
 Lies to God, lies to man, every way lies
 To nature and civility and the mode:
 Flat robbery of the proper heirs thus foiled
 O' the due succession, — and, what fol-
 lowed thence,
 Robbery of God, through the confessor's
 ear

Debarred the most noteworthy incident
When all else done and undone twelve-
month through

Was put in evidence at Easter-time.
All other peccadillos! — but this one
To the priest who comes next day to dine
with us?

'Twere inexpedient; decency forbade.

Is so far clear? You know Violante now,
Compute her capability of crime
By this authentic instance? Black hard
cold

Crime like a stone you kick up with your
foot

I' the middle of a field?

I thought as much.

But now, a question, — how long does it
lie,

The bad and barren bit of stuff you kick,
Before encroached on and encompassed
round

With minute moss, weed, wild-flower —
made alive

By worm, and fly, and foot of the free bird?

Your Highness, — healthy minds let by-
gones be,

Leave old crimes to grow young and vir-
tuous-like

I' the sun and air; so time treats ugly
deeds:

They take the natural blessing of all
change.

There was the joy o' the husband silly-
sooth,

The softening of the wife's old wicked
heart,

Virtues to right and left, profusely paid
If so they might compensate the saved
sin.

And then the sudden existence, dewy-dear,
O' the rose above the dunghheap, the pure
child

As good as new created, since withdrawn
From the horror of the pre-appointed lot

With the unknown father and the mother
known

Too well, — some fourteen years of squalid
youth,

And then libertinage, disease, the grave —
Hell in life here, hereafter life in hell:

Look at that horror and this soft repose!

Why, moralist, the sin has saved a soul!

Then, even the palpable grievance to the
heirs —

'Faith, this was no frank setting hand to
throat

And robbing a man, but . . . Excellency,
by your leave,

How did you get that marvel of a gem,
The sapphire with the Graces grand and
Greck?

The story is, stooping to pick a stone

From the pathway through a vineyard
no man's land

To pelt a sparrow with, you chanced on
this:

Why now, do those five clowns o' the
family

O' the vinedresser digest their porridge
worse

That not one keeps it in his goatskin
pouch

To do flint's-service with the tinder-box?

Don't cheat me, don't cheat you, don't
cheat a friend,

But are you so hard on who jostles just
A stranger with no natural sort of claim

To the havings and the holdings (here's the 54
point)

Unless by misadventure, and defect
Of that which ought to be — nay, which
there's none

Would dare so much as wish to profit by —
Since who dares put in just so many words

"May Pietro fail to have a child, please
God!

"So shall his house and goods belong to
me,

"The sooner that his heart will pine be-
times"?

Well then, God doesn't please, nor heart
shall pine!

Because he has a child at last, you see,
Or selfsame thing as though a child it were, 60

He thinks, whose sole concern it is to
think:

If he accepts it why should you demur?

Moreover, say that certain sin there seem,
The proper process of unsinning sin

Is to begin well-doing somehow else.

Pietro, — remember, with no sin at all
I' the substitution, — why, this gift of God

Flung in his lap from over Paradise

Steadied him in a moment, set him straight
On the good path he had been straying 70
from.

Henceforward no more wilfulness and
waste,

Cuppings, carousings, — these a sponge
wiped out.

All sort of self-denial was easy now
For the child's sake, the chatelaine to be,

Who must want much and might want who
knows what?

And so, the debts were paid, habits re-
formed,

Expense curtailed, the dowry set to grow.
As for the wife, — I said, hers the whole
sin:

So, hers the exemplary penance. 'Twas
a text

Whereon folk preached and praised, the 80
district through:

"Oh, make us happy and you make us
good!

"It all comes of God giving her a child:
 "Such graces follow God's best earthly
 gift!"

Here you put by my guard, pass to my
 heart

By the home-thrust — "There's a lie at
 base of all."

Why, thou exact Prince, is it a pearl or no,
 Yon globe upon the Principessa's neck?

That great round glory of pellucid stuff,

A fish secreted round a grain of grit!

Do you call it worthless for the worthless
 core?

10 (She doesn't, who well knows what she
 changed for it.)

So, 'to our brace of burgesses again!

You see so far i' the story, who was right,

Who wrong, who neither, don't you?

What, you don't?

Eh? Well, admit there's somewhat dark
 i' the case,

Let's on — the rest shall clear, I promise
 you.

Leap over a dozen years: you find, these
 past,

An old good easy creditable sire,

A careful housewife's beaming bustling
 face,

Both wrapped up in the love of their one
 child,

20 The strange tall pale beautiful creature
 grown

Lily-like out o' the cleft i' the sun-smit
 rock

To bow its white miraculous birth of
 buds

I' the way of wandering Joseph and his
 spouse, —

So painters fancy: here it was a fact.

And this their lily, — could they but trans-
 plant

And set in vase to stand by Solomon's
 porch

'Twixt lion and lion! — this Pompilia of
 theirs,

Could they see worthily married, well be-
 stowed,

In house and home! And why despair of
 this

30 With Rome to choose from, save the top-
 most rank?

Themselves would help the choice with
 heart and soul,

Throw their late savings in a common
 heap

To go with the dowry, and be followed in
 time

By the heritage legitimately hers:

And when such paragon was found and
 fixed,

Why, they might chant their "*Nunc
 dimittis*" straight.

Indeed the prize was simply full to a fault,
 Exorbitant for the suitor they should seek,
 And social class should choose among,
 these cits.

Yet there's a latitude: exceptional white
 Amid the general brown o' the species,
 lurks

A burgess nearly an aristocrat,
 Legitimately in reach: look out for him!

What banker, merchant, has seen better
 days,

What second-rate painter a-pushing up,
 Poet a-slipping down, shall bid the best
 For this young beauty with the thumping
 purse?

Alack, were it but one of such as these
 So like the real thing that they pass for it,
 All had gone well! Unluckily, poor souls,
 It proved to be the impossible thing itself,
 Truth and not sham: hence ruin to them
 all.

For, Guido Franceschini was the head
 Of an old family in Arezzo, old
 To that degree they could afford be poor
 Better than most: the case is common too.
 Out of the vast door 'scutcheoned over-
 head,

Creeps out a serving-man on Saturdays
 To cater for the week, — turns up anon
 I' the market, chaffering for the lamb's
 least leg,

Or the quarter-fowl, less entrails, claws
 and comb:

Then back again with prize, — a liver
 begged

Into the bargain, gizzard overlooked.
 He's mincing these to give the beans a
 taste,

When, at your knock, he leaves the sim-
 mering soup,

Waits on the curious stranger-visitant,
 Napkin in half-wiped hand, to show the

rooms,
 Point pictures out have hung their hun-
 dred years,

"Priceless," he tells you, — puts in his
 place at once

The man of money: yes, you're banker-
 king

Or merchant-kaiser, wallow in your wealth
 While patron, the house-master, can't

afford
 To stop our ceiling-hole that rain so rots:

But he's the man of mark, and there's his
 shield,

And yonder's the famed Rafael, first in
 kind,

The painter painted for his grandfather,
 And you have paid to see: "Good morn-
 ing, Sir!"

Such is the law of compensation. Still
 The poverty was getting nigh acute;

There gaped so many noble mouths to feed,
 Beans must suffice unflavoured of the fowl.
 The mother, — hers would be a spun-out life
 I' the nature of things; the sisters had done well
 And married men of reasonable rank:
 But that sort of illumination stops,
 Throws back no heat upon the parent-heart.
 The family instinct felt out for its fire
 To the Church, — the Church tradition-ally helps
 A second son: and such was Paolo,
 Established here at Rome these thirty years,
 Who played the regular game, — priest and Abate,
 Made friends, owned house and land, became of use
 To a personage: his course lay clear enough.
 The youngest caught the sympathetic flame,
 And, though unfledged wings kept him still i' the cage,
 Yet he shot up to be a Canon, so
 Clung to the higher perch and crowed in hope.
 Even our Guido, eldest brother, went
 As far i' the way o' the Church as safety seemed,
 He being Head o' the House, ordained to wive, —
 So, could but dally with an Order or two
 And testify good-will i' the cause: he clipped
 His top-hair and thus far affected Christ.
 But main promotion must fall otherwise,
 Though still from the side o' the Church: and here was he
 At Rome, since first youth, worn thread-bare of soul
 By forty-six years' rubbing on hard life,
 Getting fast tired o' the game whose word is — "Wait!"
 When one day, — he too having his Cardinal
 To serve in some ambiguous sort, as serve
 To draw the coach the plumes o' the horses' heads, —
 The Cardinal saw fit to dispense with him,
 Ride with one plume the less; and off it dropped.

Guido thus left, — with a youth spent in vain
 And not a penny in purse to show for it, —
 Advised with Paolo, bent no doubt in chafe
 The black brows somewhat formidably,
 growled

"Where is the good I came to get at Rome?
 "Where the repayment of the servitude 40
 "To a purple popinjay, whose feet I kiss,
 "Knowing his father wiped the shoes of mine?"
 "Patience," pats Paolo the recalcitrant —
 "You have not had, so far, the proper luck,
 "Nor do my gains suffice to keep us both:
 "A modest competency is mine, not more.
 "You are the Count, however, yours the style,
 "Heirdom and state, — you can't expect all good.
 "Had I, now, held your hand of cards . . . well, well —
 "What's yet unplayed, I'll look at, by your 50 leave,
 "Over your shoulder, — I who made my game,
 "Let's see, if I can't help to handle yours.
 "Fie on you, all the Honours in your fist,
 "Countship, Househeadship, — how have you misdealt!
 "Why, in the first place, these will marry a man!
 "*Notum tonsoribus*! ¹ To the Tonsor then!
 "Come, clear your looks, and choose your freshest suit,
 "And, after function's done with, down we go
 "To the woman-dealer in perukes, a wench
 "I and some others settled in the shop 60
 "At Place Colonna: she's an oracle. Hmm!
 "Dear, 'tis my brother: brother, 'tis my dear.
 "Dear, give us counsel! Whom do you suggest
 "As properest party in the quarter round
 "For the Count here? — he is minded to take wife,
 "And further tells me he intends to slip
 "Twenty zecchines under the bottom scalp
 "Of his old wig when he sends it to revive
 "For the wedding: and I add a trifle too.
 "You know what personage I'm potent 70 with."
 And so plumped out Pompilia's name the first.
 She told them of the household and its ways,
 The easy husband and the shrewder wife
 In Via Vittoria, — how the tall young girl,
 With hair black as yon patch and eyes as big

¹ *Notum tonsoribus*: "known to the barbers."
 See note on line 43, p. 668.

As yon pomander to make freckles fly,
Would have so much for certain, and so
much more

In likelihood, — why, it suited, slipped as
smooth

As the Pope's pantoufle does on the Pope's
foot.

"I'll to the husband!" Guido ups and
cries.

"Ay, so you'd play your last court-card, no
doubt!"

10 "Puts Paolo in with a groan — "Only, you
see,

"'Tis I, this time, that supervise your lead.

"Priests play with women, maids, wives,
mothers — why?

10 "These play with men and take them off
our hands.

"Did I come, counsel with some cut-beard
gruff

"Or rather this sleek young-old barberess?

"Go, brother, stand you rapt in the ante-
room

"Of Her Efficacy my Cardinal

"For an hour, — he likes to have lord-
suits lounge, —

"While I betake myself to the grey mare,

"The better horse, — how wise the
people's word! —

"And wait on Madam Violante."

Said and done.

He was at Via Vittoria in three skips:

20 Proposed at once to fill up the one want
O' the burgess-family which, wealthy
enough,

And comfortable to heart's desire, yet
crouched

Outside a gate to heaven, — locked,
bolted, barred,

Whereof Count Guido had a key he kept
Under his pillow, but Pompilia's hand

Might slide behind his neck and pilfer
thence.

The key was fairy; its mere mention made
Violante feel the thing shoot one sharp ray

That reached the womanly heart: so —
"I assent!

30 "Yours be Pompilia, hers and ours that
key

"To all the glories of the greater life!

"There's Pietro to convince: leave that to
me!"

Then was the matter broached to Pietro;
then

Did Pietro make demand and get response

That in the Countship was a truth, but in

The counting up of the Count's cash, a lie.

He thereupon stroked grave his chin,

looked great,

Declined the honour. Then the wife
wiped tear,

Winked with the other eye turned Paolo-
ward,

Whispered Pompilia, stole to church at
eve,

Found Guido there and got the marriage
done,

And finally begged pardon at the feet
Of her dear lord and master. Whereupon

Quoth Pietro — "Let us make the best of
things!"

"I knew your love would license us,"
quoth she:

Quoth Paolo once more, "Mothers, wives
and maids,

"These be the tools wherewith priests
manage men."

Now, here take breath and ask, — which
bird o' the brace

Decoyed the other into clapnet? Who
Was fool, who knave? Neither and both,

perchance.

There was a bargain mentally proposed
On each side, straight and plain and fair

enough;

Mind knew its own mind: but when mind
must speak,

The bargain have expression in plain
terms,

There came the blunder incident to words,
And in the clumsy process, fair turned
foul.

The straight backbone-thought of the
crooked speech

Were just — "I Guido truck my name
and rank

"For so much money and youth and
female charms. —

"We Pietro and Violante give our child

"And wealth to you for a rise i' the world
thereby."

Such naked truth while chambered in the
brain

Shocks nowise; walk it forth by way of
tongue, —

Out on the cynical unseemliness!
Hence was the need, on either side, of a lie

To serve as decent wrappage: so, Guido
gives

Money for money, — and they, bride for
groom,

Having, he, not a doit, they, not a child
Honestly theirs, but this poor waif and
stray.

According to the words, each cheated each;
But in the inexpressive barter of thoughts,

Each did give and did take the thing
designed,

The rank on this side and the cash on
that —

Attained the object of the traffic, so.

The way of the world, the daily bargain
struck

In the first market! Why sells Jack his ware?
 "For the sake of serving an old customer."
 Why does Jill buy it? "Simply not to break
 "A custom, pass the old stall the first time."
 Why, you know where the gist is of the exchange:
 Each sees a profit, throws the fine words in.
 Don't be too hard o' the pair! Had each pretence
 Been simultaneously discovered, stript
 From off the body o' the transaction, just
 As—when a cook (will Excellency forgive?)
 Strips away those long rough superfluous legs
 From either side the crayfish, leaving folk
 A meal all meat henceforth, no garnishry,
 (With your respect, Prince!)—balance had been kept,
 No party blamed the other, — so, starting fair,
 All subsequent fence of wrong returned by wrong
 I' the matrimonial thrust and parry, at least
 Had followed on equal terms. But, as it chanced,
 One party had the advantage, saw the cheat
 Of the other first and kept its own concealed:
 And the luck o' the first discovery fell, beside,
 To the least adroit and self-possessed o' the pair.
 'Twas foolish Pietro and his wife saw first
 The nobleman was penniless, and screamed
 "We are cheated!"

Such unprofitable noise
 Angers at all times: but when those who plague,
 Do it from inside your own house and home,
 Gnats which yourself have closed the curtain round,
 Noise goes too near the brain and makes you mad.
 The gnats say, Guido used the candle-flame
 Unfairly, — worsened that first bad of his,
 By practising all kinds of cruelty
 To oust them and suppress the wail and whine, —
 That speedily he so scared and bullied them,
 Fain were they, long before five months had passed,

To beg him grant, from what was once their wealth,
 Just so much as would help them back to Rome
 Where, when they finished paying the last doit.
 O' the dowry, they might beg from door to door.
 So say the Comparini — as if it came 40
 Of pure resentment for this worse than bad,
 That then Violante, feeling conscience prick,
 Confessed her substitution of the child
 Whence all the harm fell, — and that Pietro first
 Bethought him of advantage to himself
 I' the deed, as part revenge, part remedy
 For all miscalculation in the pact.

On the other hand "Not so!" Guido retorts —
 "I am the wronged, solely, from first to last,
 "Who gave the dignity I engaged to give, 50
 "Which was, is, cannot but continue gain.
 "My being poor was a bye-circumstance,
 "Miscalculated piece of untowardness,
 "Might end to-morrow did heaven's windows ope,
 "Or uncle die and leave me his estate.
 "You should have put up with the minor flaw,
 "Getting the main prize of the jewel. If wealth,
 "Not rank, had been prime object in your thoughts,
 "Why not have taken the butcher's son, the boy
 "O' the baker or candlestick-maker? In 60
 all the rest
 "It was yourselves broke compact and played false,
 "And made a life in common impossible.
 "Show me the stipulation of our bond
 "That you should make your profit of being inside
 "My house, to hustle and edge me out o' the same,
 "First make a laughing-stock of mine and me,
 "Then round us in the ears from morn to night
 "(Because we show wry faces at your mirth)
 "That you are robbed, starved, beaten and what not!
 "You fled a hell of your own lighting-up, 70
 "Pav for your own miscalculation too:
 "You thought nobility, gained at any price,
 "Would suit and satisfy, — find the mistake,

"And now retaliate, not on yourselves,
 but me.
 "And how? By telling me, i' the face of
 the world,
 "I it is have been cheated all this while,
 "Abominably and irreparably, — my
 name
 "Given to a cur-cast mongrel, a drab's
 brat,
 "A beggar's bye-blow, — thus depriving
 me
 "Of what yourselves allege the whole and
 sole
 "Aim on my part i' the marriage, —
 money, to-wit.
 "This thrust I have to parry by a
 guard
 10 "Which leaves me open to a counter-
 thrust
 "On the other side, — no way but there's
 a pass
 "Clean through me. If I prove, as I hope
 to do,
 "There's not one truth in this your odious
 tale
 "O' the buying, selling, substituting —
 prove
 "Your daughter was and is your
 daughter, — well,
 "And her dowry hers and therefore
 mine, — what then?
 "Why, where's the appropriate punish-
 ment for this
 "Enormous lie hatched for mere malice'
 sake
 "To ruin me? Is that a wrong or no?
 20 "And if I try revenge for remedy,
 "Can I well make it strong and bitter
 enough?"

I anticipate however — only ask,
 Which of the two here sinned most? A
 nice point!
 Which brownness is least black, — decide
 who can,
 Wager-by-battle-of-cheating! What do
 you say,
 Highness? Suppose, your Excellency, we
 leave
 The question at this stage, proceed to the
 next,
 Both parties step out, fight their prize upon,
 In the eye o' the world?
 They brandish law 'gainst law;
 30 The grinding of such blades, each parry of
 each,
 Throws terrible sparks off, over and above
 the thrusts,
 And makes more sinister the fight, to the
 eye,
 Than the very wounds that follow. Be-
 side the tale
 Which the Comparini have to re-assert,

They needs must write, print, publish all
 abroad
 The straitnesses of Guido's household life —
 The petty nothings we bear privately
 But break down under when fools flock to
 jeer.
 What is it all to the facts o' the couple's
 case,
 How helps it prove Pompilia not their
 child,
 If Guido's mother, brother, kith and kin
 Fare ill, lie hard, lack clothes, lack fire.
 lack food?
 That's one more wrong than needs.

On the other hand,
 Guido, — whose cue is to dispute the
 truth
 O' the tale, reject the shame it throws on
 him, —
 He may retaliate, fight his foe in turn
 And welcome, we allow. Ay, but he
 can't!
 He's at home, only acts by proxy here:
 Law may meet law, — but all the gibes
 and jeers,
 The superfluity of naughtiness,
 Those libels on his House, — how reach
 at them?
 Two hateful faces, grinning all a-glow,
 Not only make parade of spoil they
 filched,
 But foul him from the height of a tower,
 you see.
 Unluckily temptation is at hand —
 To take revenge on a trifle overlooked,
 A pet lamb they have left in reach outside,
 Whose first bleat, when he plucks the wool
 away,
 Will strike the grinners grave: his wife
 remains
 Who, four months earlier, some thirteen
 years old,
 Never a mile away from mother's house
 And petted to the height of her desire,
 Was told one morning that her fate had
 come,
 She must be married — just as, a month
 before,
 Her mother told her she must comb her
 hair
 And twist her curls into one knot behind.
 These fools forgot their pet lamb, fed with
 flowers,
 Then 'ticed as usual by the bit of cake
 Out of the bower into the butchery.
 Plague her, he plagues them threefold:
 but how plague?
 The world may have its word to say to
 that:
 You can't do some things with impunity.
 What remains . . . well, it is an ugly
 thought . . .

But that he drive herself to plague herself —

Herself disgrace herself and so disgrace
Who seek to disgrace Guido?

There's the clue

To what else seems gratuitously vile,
If, as is said, from this time forth the rack
Was tried upon Pompilia: 'twas to wrench
Her limbs into exposure that brings shame.
The aim o' the cruelty being so crueller
still,

That cruelty almost grows compassion's
self

Could one attribute it to mere return
O' the parents' outrage, wrong avenging
wrong.

They see in this a deeper deadlier aim,
Not to vex just a body they held dear,
But blacken too a soul they boasted white,
And show the world their saint in a lover's
arms,
No matter how driven thither, — so they
say.

On the other hand, so much is easily said,
And Guido lacks not an apologist.

The pair had nobody but themselves to
blame.

Being selfish beasts throughout, no less,
no more:

— Cared for themselves, their supposed
good, nought else,

And brought about the marriage; good
proved bad,

As little they cared for her its victim —
nay,

Meant she should stay behind and take
the chance,

If haply they might wriggle themselves free.
They baited their own hook to catch a fish

With this poor worm, failed o' the prize,
' and then

Sought how to unbait tackle, let worm
float

Or sink, amuse the monster while they
'scaped.

Under the best stars Hymen brings above,
Had all been honesty on either side,

A common sincere effort to good end,
Still, this would prove a difficult problem,

Prince!

— Given, a fair wife, aged thirteen years,
A husband poor, care-bitten, sorrow-sunk,

Little, long-nosed, bush-bearded, lantern-
jawed,

Forty-six years old, — place the two grown
one,

She, cut off sheer from every natural aid,
In a strange town with no familiar face —

He, in his own parade-ground or retreat
If need were, free from challenge, much
less check

To an irritated, disappointed will —

How evolve happiness from such a match?

'Twere hard to serve up a congenial dish
Out of these ill-agreeing morsels, Duke,
By the best exercise of the cook's craft,
Best interspersions of spice, salt and sweet!
But let two ghastly scullions concoct mess
With brimstone, pitch, vitriol and devil's-
dung —

Throw in abuse o' the man, his body and 50
soul,

Kith, kin and generation, shake all slab
At Rome, Arezzo, for the world to nose,
Then end by publishing, for fiend's arch-
prank,

That, over and above sauce to the meat's
self,

Why, even the meat, bedevilled thus in
dish,

Was never a pheasant but a carrion-
crow —

Prince, what will then the natural loathing
be?

What wonder if this? — the compound
plague o' the pair

Pricked Guido, — not to take the course
they hoped,

That is, submit him to their statement's 60
truth,

Accept its obvious promise of relief,
And thrust them out of doors the girl

again
Since the girl's dowry would not enter

there,
— Quit of the one if balked of the other:

no!

Rather did rage and hate so work on him,
Their product proved the horrible conceit

That he should plot and plan and bring
to pass

His wife might, of her own free will and
deed,

Relieve him of her presence, get her gone,
And yet leave all the dowry safe behind, 70

Confirmed his own henceforward past
dispute,

While blotting out, as by a belch of hell,
Their triumph in her misery and death.

You see, the man was Aretine, had touch
O' the subtle air that breeds the subtle wit;

Was noble too, of old blood thrice-re-
fined

That shrinks from clownish coarseness in
disgust:

Allow that such an one may take revenge,
You don't expect he'll catch up stone and

fling,
Or try cross-buttock, or whirl quarter- 80
staff?

Instead of the honest drubbing clowns
bestow,

When out of temper at the dinner spoilt,

On meddling mother-in-law and tiresome wife, —
 Substitute for the clown a nobleman,
 And you have Guido, practising, 'tis said,
 Immitigably from the very first,
 The finer vengeance: this, they say, the fact
 O' the famous letter shows — the writing traced
 At Guido's instance by the timid wife
 Over the pencilled words himself writ first —
 Wherein she, who could neither write nor read,
 10 Was made unblushingly declare a tale
 To the brother, the Abate then in Rome,
 How her putative parents had impressed,
 On their departure, their enjoinment; bade
 "We being safely arrived here, fellow, you!
 "Poison your husband, rob, set fire to all,
 "And then by means o' the gallant you procure
 "With ease, by helpful eye and ready tongue,
 "Some brave youth ready to dare, do and die,
 "You shall run off and merrily reach Rome
 20 "Where we may live like flies in honey-pot:" —
 Such being exact the programme of the course
 Imputed her as carried to effect.

They also say, — to keep her straight therein,
 All sort of torture was piled, pain on pain,
 On either side Pompilia's path of life,
 Built round about and over against by fear,
 Circumvallated month by month, and week
 By week, and day by day, and hour by hour,
 Close, closer and yet closer still with pain,
 30 No outlet from the encroaching pain save just
 Where stood one saviour like a piece of heaven,
 Hell's arms would strain round but for this blue gap.
 She, they say further, first tried every chink,
 Every imaginable break i' the fire,
 As way of escape: ran to the Commissary,
 Who bade her not malign his friend her spouse;
 Flung herself thrice at the Archbishop's feet,
 Where three times the Archbishop let her lie,
 Spend her whole sorrow and sob full heart forth,
 40 And then took up the slight load from the ground

And bore it back for husband to chastise,
 Mildly of course, — but natural right is right.
 So went she slipping ever yet catching at help,
 Missing the high till come to lowest and last,
 To wit a certain friar of mean degree,
 Who heard her story in confession, wept,
 Crossed himself, showed the man within the monk.
 "Then, will you save me, you the one i' the world?
 "I cannot even write my woes, nor put
 "My prayer for help in words a friend may read, —
 "I no more own a coin than have an hour
 "Free of observance, — I was watched to church,
 "Am watched now, shall be watched back presently, —
 "How buy the skill of scribe i' the marketplace?
 "Pray you, write down and send whatever I say
 "O' the need I have my parents take me hence!"
 The good man rubbed his eyes and could not choose —
 Let her dictate her letter in such a sense
 That parents, to save breaking down a wall,
 Might lift her over: she went back, heaven in heart.
 Then the good man took counsel of his couch,
 Woke and thought twice, the second thought the best:
 "Here am I, foolish body that I be,
 "Caught all but pushing, teaching, who but I,
 "My betters their plain duty, — what, I dare
 "Help a case the Archbishop would not help,
 "Mend matters, peradventure, God loves mar?
 "What hath the married life but strifes and plagues
 "For proper dispensation? So a fool
 "Once touched the ark, — poor Uzzah that I am!
 "Oh married ones, much rather should I bid,
 "In patience all of ye possess your souls!
 "This life is brief and troubles die with it:
 "Where were the prick to soar up homeward else?"
 So saying, he burnt the letter he had writ,
 Said *Ave* for her intention, in its place,
 Took snuff and comfort, and had done with all.
 Then the grim arms stretched yet a little more

And each touched each, all but one streak
 i' the midst,
 Whereat stood Caponsacchi, who cried,
 "This way,
 "Out by me! Hesitate one moment more
 "And the fire shuts out me and shuts in
 you!
 "Here my hand holds you life out!"
 Whereupon
 She clasped the hand, which closed on hers
 and drew
 Pompilia out o' the circle now complete.
 Whose fault or shame but Guido's? — ask
 her friends.

But then this is the wife's — Pompilia's
 tale —
 Eve's . . . no, not Eve's, since Eve, to
 speak the truth,
 Was hardly fallen (our candour might
 pronounce)
 When simply saying in her own defence
 "The serpent tempted me and I did eat."
 So much of paradisal nature, Eve's!
 Her daughters ever since prefer to urge
 "Adam so starved me I was fain accept
 "The apple any serpent pushed my way."
 What an elaborate theory have we here,
 Ingeniously nursed up, pretentiously
 Brought forth, pushed forward amid
 trumpet-blast,
 To account for the thawing of an icicle,
 Show us there needed Ætna vomit flame
 Ere run the crystal into dew-drops! Else,
 How, unless hell broke loose to cause the
 step,
 How could a married lady go astray?
 Bless the fools! And 'tis just this way they
 are blessed,
 And the world wags still, — because fools
 are sure
 — Oh, not of my wife nor your daughter!
 No!
 But of their own: the case is altered quite.
 Look now, — last week, the lady we all
 love, —
 Daughter o' the couple we all venerate,
 Wife of the husband we all cap before,
 Mother o' the babes we all breathe bless-
 ings on, —
 Was caught in converse with a negro
 page.
 Hell thawed that icicle, else "Why was it —
 "Why?" asked and echoed the fools.
 "Because, you fools, —"
 So did the dame's self answer, she who
 could,
 With that fine candour only forthcoming
 When 'tis no odds whether withheld or
 no —
 "Because my husband was the saint you
 say,
 "And, — with that childish goodness,
 absurd faith,

"Stupid self-satisfaction, you so praise, —
 "Saint to you, insupportable to me.
 "Had he, — instead of calling me fine
 names,
 "Lucretia and Susanna and so forth,
 "And curtaining Correggio carefully
 "Lest I be taught that Leda had two
 legs, —
 "— But once never so little tweaked my
 nose
 "For peeping through my fan at Carnival,
 "Confessing thereby 'I have no easy 50
 task —
 "I need use all my powers to hold you
 mine,
 "And then, — why 'tis so doubtful if they
 serve,
 "That — take this, as an earnest of
 despair!"
 "Why, we were quits: I had wiped the
 harm away,
 "Thought 'The man fears me!' and fore-
 gone revenge."
 We must not want all this elaborate work
 To solve the problem why young Fancy-
 and-flesh
 Slips from the dull side of a spouse in years,
 Betakes it to the breast of Brisk-and-bold
 Whose love-scrapes furnish talk for all the 60
 town!

Accordingly one word on the other side
 Tips over the piled-up fabric of a tale.
 Guido says — that is, always, his friends
 say —
 It is unlikely, from the wickedness,
 That any man treat any woman so.
 The letter in question was her very own,
 Unprompted and unaided: she could
 write —
 As able to write as ready to sin, or free,
 When there was danger, to deny both facts.
 He bids you mark, herself from first to last 70
 Attributes all the so-styled torture just
 To jealousy, — jealousy of whom but just
 This very Caponsacchi! How suits here
 This with the other alleged motive,
 Prince?
 Would Guido make a terror of the man
 He meant should tempt the woman, as they
 charge?
 Do you fright your hare that you may catch
 your hare?
 Consider too, the charge was made and met
 At the proper time and place where proofs
 were plain —
 Heard patiently and disposed of thor- 80
 oughly
 By the highest powers, possessors of most
 light,
 The Governor for the law, and the Arch-
 bishop
 For the gospel: which acknowledged
 primacies,

'Tis impudently pleaded, he could warp
 Into a tacit partnership with crime —
 He being the while, believe their own
 account,
 Impotent, penniless and miserable!
 He further asks — Duke, note the knotty
 point! —
 How he, — concede him skill to play such
 part
 And drive his wife into a gallant's arms, —
 Could bring the gallant to play his part too
 And stand with arms so opportunely wide?
 10 How bring this Caponsacchi, — with
 whom, friends
 And foes alike agree, throughout his life
 He never interchanged a civil word
 Nor lifted courteous cap to — him how
 bend
 To such observancy of beck and call,
 — To undertake this strange and perilous
 feat
 For the good of Guido, using, as the lure,
 Pompilia whom, himself and she avouch,
 He had nor spoken with nor seen, indeed,
 Beyond sight in a public theatre,
 20 When she wrote letters (she that could not
 write!)
 The importunate shamelessly-protested
 love
 Which brought him, though reluctant, to
 her feet,
 And forced on him the plunge which,
 howsoe'er
 She might swim up i' the whirl, must bury
 him
 Under abysmal black: a priest contrive
 No better, no amour to be hushed up,
 But open flight and noon-day infamy?
 Try and concoct defence for such revolt!
 Take the wife's tale as true, say she was
 wronged, —
 30 Pray, in what rubric of the breviary
 Do you find it registered — the part of a
 priest
 Is — that to right wrongs from the church
 he skip,
 Go journeying with a woman that's a wife,
 And be pursued, o'ertaken and captured
 . . . how?
 In a lay-dress, playing the kind sentinel
 Where the wife sleeps (says he who best
 should know)
 And sleeping, sleepless, both have spent
 the night!
 Could no one else be found to serve at
 need —
 No woman — or if man, no safer sort
 40 Than this not well-reputed turbulence?
 Then, look into his own account o' the
 case!
 He, being the stranger and astonished one,
 Yet received protestations of her love
 From lady neither known nor cared about:

Love, so protested, bred in him disgust
 After the wonder, — or incredulity,
 Such impudence seeming impossible.
 But, soon assured such impudence might
 be,
 When he had seen with his own eyes at last
 Letters thrown down to him i' the very
 street
 From behind lattice where the lady lurked,
 And read their passionate summons to her
 side —
 Why then, a thousand thoughts swarmed
 up and in, —
 How he had seen her once, a moment's
 space,
 Observed she was both young and beauti-
 ful,
 Heard everywhere report she suffered much
 From a jealous husband thrice her age, —
 in short
 There flashed the propriety, expediency
 Of treating, trying might they come to
 terms,
 — At all events, granting the interview
 Prayed for, one so adapted to assist
 Decision as to whether he advance,
 Stand or retire, in his benevolent mood!
 Therefore the interview befell at length;
 And at this one and only interview,
 He saw the sole and single course to take —
 Bade her dispose of him, head, heart and
 hand,
 Did her behest and braved the consequence,
 Not for the natural end, the love of man
 For woman whether love be virtue or
 vice,
 But, please you, altogether for pity's
 sake —
 Pity of innocence and helplessness!
 And how did he assure himself of both?
 Had he been the house-inmate, visitor,
 Eye-witness of the described martyrdom,
 So, competent to pronounce its remedy
 Ere rush on such extreme and desperate
 course —
 Involving such enormity of harm,
 Moreover, to the husband judged thus,
 doomed
 And damned without a word in his de-
 fence?
 Not he! the truth was felt by instinct here,
 — Process which saves a world of trouble
 and time.
 There's the priest's story: what do you
 say to it,
 Trying its truth by your own instinct too,
 Since that's to be the expeditious mode?
 "And now, do hear my version," Guido
 cries:
 "I accept argument and inference both.
 "It would indeed have been miraculous
 "Had such a confidency sprung to birth
 "With no more fanning from acquaint-
 anceship

"Than here avowed by my wife and this priest.

"Only, it did not: you must substitute

"The old stale unromantic way of fault,

"The commonplace adventure, mere intrigue

"In prose form with the unpoetic tricks,

"Cheatings and lies: they used the hackney chair

"Satan jaunts forth with, shabby and serviceable,

"No gilded gimcrack-novelty from below,

"To bowl you along thither, swift and sure.

"That same officious go-between, the wench

"Who gave and took the letters of the two.

"Now offers self and service back to me:

"Bears testimony to visits night by night

"When all was safe, the husband far and away,

"To many a timely slipping out at large

"By light o' the morning-star, ere he should wake.

"And when the fugitives were found at last,

"Why, with them were found also, to belie

"What protest they might make of innocence,

"All documents yet wanting, if need were,

"To establish guilt in them, disgrace in me —

The chronicle o' the converse from its rise

"To culmination in this outrage: read!

"Letters from wife to priest, from priest to wife, —

"Here they are, read and say where they chime in

"With the other tale, superlative purity

"O' the pair of saints! I stand or fall by these."

But then on the other side again, — how say

The pair of saints? That not one word is theirs —

No syllable o' the batch or writ or sent

Or yet received by either of the two.

"Found," says the priest, "because he needed them,

"Failing all other proofs, to prove our fault:

"So, here they are, just as is natural.

"Oh yes — we had our missives, each of us!

"Not these, but to the full as vile, no doubt:

"Hers as from me, — she could not read, so burnt, —

"Mine as from her, — I burnt because I read.

"Who forged and found them? *Cui profuerint!*"¹

¹ *Cui profuerint*: "he who would profit by them?"

(I take the phrase out of your Highness' ⁴⁶ mouth)

"He who would gain by her fault and my fall,

"The trickster, schemer and pretender — he

"Whose whole career was lie entailing lie

"Sought to be sealed truth by the worst lie last!"

Guido rejoins — "Did the other end o' the tale

"Match this beginning! 'Tis alleged I prove

"A murderer at the end, a man of force

"Prompt, indiscriminate, effectual: good!

"Then what need all this trifling woman's-work,

"Letters and embassies and weak intrigue, ⁵⁰

"When will and power were mine to end at once

"Safely and surely? Murder had come first

"Not last with such a man, assure yourselves!

"The silent *acquella*,² stilling at command —

"A drop a day i' the wine or soup, the dose, —

"The shattering beam that breaks above the bed

"And beats out brains, with nobody to blame

"Except the wormy age which eats even oak, —

"Nay, the staunch steel or trusty cord, — who cares

"I' the blind old palace, a pitfall at each ⁶ step,

"With none to see, much more to interpose

"O' the two, three, creeping house-dog-servant-things

"Born mine and bred mine? Had I willed gross death,

"I had found nearer paths to thrust him prey

"Than this that goes meandering here and there

"Through half the world and calls down in its course

"Notice and noise, — hate, vengeance, should it fail,

"Derision and contempt though it succeed!

"Moreover, what o' the future son and heir?

"The unborn babe about to be called ⁷⁰ mine, —

"What end in heaping all this shame on him,

"Were I indifferent to my own black share?

² *Acquella*: a kind of slow poison.

"Would I have tried these crookednesses,
say,
"Willing and able to effect the straight?"
"Ay, would you!" — one may hear the
priest retort,
"Being as you are, i' the stock, a man of
guile,
"And ruffianism but an added graft.
"You, a horn coward, try a coward's arms,
"Trick and chicane, — and only when
these fail
"Does violence follow, and like fox you bite
"Caught out in stealing. Also, the dis-
grace
10 "You hardly shrunk at, wholly shrivelled
her:
"You plunged her thin white delicate hand
i' the flame
"Along with your coarse horny brutish fist,
"Held them a second there, then drew out
both
"— Yours roughed a little, hers ruined
through and through.
"Your hurt would heal forthwith at oint-
ment's touch
"Namely, succession to the inheritance
"Which bolder crime had lost you: let
things change,
"The birth o' the boy warrant the bolder
crime,
"Why, murder was determined, dared and
done.
20 "For me," the priest proceeds with his
reply,
"The look o' the thing, the chances of
mistake,
"All were against me, — that, I knew the
first:
"But, knowing also what my duty was,
"I did it: I must look to men more skilled
"In reading hearts than ever was the
world."

Highness, decide! Pronounce, Her Ex-
cellency!
Or . . . even leave this argument in
doubt,
Account it a fit matter, taken up
With all its faces, manifold enough,
30 To ponder on — what fronts us, the next
stage,
Next legal process? Guido, in pursuit,
Coming up with the fugitives at the inn,
Caused both to be arrested then and there
And sent to Rome for judgment on the
case —
Thither, with all his armoury of proofs,
Betook himself: 'tis there we'll meet him
now,
Waiting the further issue.

Here you smile

"And never let him henceforth dare to
plead. —

"Of all pleas and excuses in the world
"For any deed hereafter to be done, — 4
"His irrepressible wrath at honour's
wound!
"Passion and madness irrepressible?
"Why, Count and cavalier, the husband
comes
"And catches foe i' the very act of shame!
"There's man to man, — nature must have
her way, —
"We look he should have cleared things on
the spot.
"Yes, then, indeed — even tho' it prove he
erred —
"Though the ambiguous first appearance,
mount
"Of solid injury, melt soon to mist,
"Still, — had he slain the lover and the
wife —
"Or, since she was a woman and his wife,
"Slain him, but stript her naked to the
skin
"Or at best left no more of an attire
"Than patch sufficient to pin paper to,
"Some one love-letter, infamy and all,
"As passport to the Paphos¹ fit for such,
"Safe-conduct to her natural home the
stews, —
"Good! One had recognized the power
o' the pulse.
"But when he stands, the stock-fish, —
sticks to law —
"Offers the hole in his heart, all fresh and
warm,
"For scrivener's pen to poke and play
about —
"Can stand, can stare, can tell his beads
perhaps,
"Oh, let us hear no syllable o' the rage!
"Such rage were a convenient afterthought
"For one who would have shown his teeth
belike,
"Exhibited unbridled rage enough,
"Had but the priest been found, as was to
hope,
"In serge, not silk, with crucifix, not
sword:
"Whereas the grey innocuous grub, of yore,
"Had hatched a hornet, tickle to the
touch,
"The priest was metamorphosed into
knight.
"And even the timid wife, whose cue was
— shriek,
"Bury her brow beneath his trampling
foot, —
"She too sprang at him like a pythoness.
"So, gulp down rage, passion must be
postponed,

¹ *Paphos*: Paphos, in Cyprus, was the head-
quarters of the worship of Aphrodite, which
was there accompanied by licentious rites and
practices.

- "Calm be the word! Well, cur word is —
we brand
"This part o' the business, howsoever the
rest
"Befall."
"Nay," interpose as prompt his friends,
"This is the world's way! So you adjudge
reward
"To the forbearance and legality
"Yourselves begin by inculcating — ay,
"Exacting from us all with knife at throat!
"This one wrong more you add to wrong's
amount, —
"You publish all, with the kind comment
here,
10 "Its victim was too cowardly for re-
venge."
Make it your own case, — you who stand
apart!
The husband wakes one morn from heavy
sleep,
With a taste of poppy in his mouth, —
rubs eyes,
Finds his wife flown, his strong box ran-
sacked too,
Follows as he best can, overtakes i' the end.
You bid him use his privilege: well, it
seems
He's scarce cool-blooded enough for the
right move —
Does not shoot when the game were sure,
but stands
Bewildered at the critical minute, — since
20 He has the first flash of the fact alone
To judge from, act with, not the steady
lights
Of after-knowledge, — yours who stand at
ease
To try conclusions: he's in smother and
smoke,
You outside, with explosion at an end:
The sulphur may be lightning or a squib —
He'll know in a minute, but till then, he
doubts.
Back from what you know to what he
knew not!
Hear the priest's lofty "I am innocent."
The wife's as resolute "You are guilty!"
Come!
30 Are you not staggered? — pause, and you
lose the move!
Nought left you but a low appeal to law,
"Coward!" tied to your tail for compli-
ment!
Another consideration: have it your way!
Admit the worst: his courage failed the
Count,
He's cowardly like the best o' the bur-
gesses
He's grown incorporate with, — a very
cur,
Kick him from out your circle by all means!
Why, trundled down this reputable stair,
- Still, the Church-door lies wide to take him
in,
And the Court-porch also: in he sneaks 40
to each, —
"Yes, I have lost my honour and my wife,
"And, being moreover an ignoble hound,
"I dare not jeopardize my life for them!"
Religion and Law lean forward from their
chairs,
"Well done, thou good and faithful ser-
vant!" Ay,
Not only applaud him that he scorned the
world,
But punish should he dare do otherwise.
If the case be clear or turbid, — you must
say!
- Thus, anyhow, it mounted to the stage
In the law-courts, — let's see clearly from 50
this point! —
Where the priest tells his story true or false,
And the wife her story, and the husband
his,
All with result as happy as before.
The courts would nor condemn nor yet
acquit
This, that or the other, in so distinct a sense
As end the strife to either's absolute loss:
Pronounced, in place of something definite,
"Each of the parties, whether goat or sheep
"I' the main, has wool to show and hair to
hide.
"Each has brought somehow trouble, is 60
somehow cause
"Of pains enough, — even though no
worse were proved.
"Here is a husband, cannot rule his wife
"Without provoking her to scream and
scratch
"And scour the fields, — causelessly, it
may be:
"Here is that wife, — who makes her sex
our plague,
"Wedlock, our bugbear, — perhaps with
cause enough:
"And here is the truant priest o' the trio,
worst
"Or best — each quality being conceivable.
"Let us impose a little mulct on each.
"We punish youth in state of pupillage 70
"Who talk at hours when youth is bound to
sleep,
"Whether the prattle turn upon Saint Rose
"Or Donna Olimpia of the Vatican:
"Tis talk, talked wisely or unwisely talked,
"I' the dormitory where to talk at all,
"Transgresses, and is mulct: as here we
mean.
"For the wife, — let her betake herself,
for rest,
"After her run, to a House of Convert-
ites —
"Keep there, as good as real imprisonment:

- "Being sick and tired, she will recover so.
 "For the priest, spritely strayer out of bounds,
 "Who made Arezzo hot to hold him, — Rome
 "Profits by his withdrawal from the scene.
 "Let him be relegate to Civita,
 "Circumscribed by its bounds till matters mend:
 "There he at least lies out o' the way of harm
 "From foes — perhaps from the too friendly fair.
 "And finally for the husband, whose rash rule
 o "Has but itself to blame for this ado, —
 "If he be vexed that, in our judgments dealt,
 "He fails obtain what he accounts his right,
 "Let him go comforted with the thought, no less,
 "That, turn each sentence howsoever he may,
 "There's satisfaction to extract therefrom.
 "For, does he wish his wife proved innocent?
 "Well, she's not guilty, he may safely urge,
 "Has missed the stripes dishonest wives endure —
 "This being a fatherly pat o' the cheek, no more.
 20 "Does he wish her guilty? Were she otherwise
 "Would she be locked up, set to say her prayers,
 "Prevented intercourse with the outside world,
 "And that suspected priest in banishment,
 "Whose portion is a further help i' the case?
 "Oh, ay, you all of you want the other thing
 "The extreme of law, some verdict neat, complete, —
 "Either, the whole o' the dowry in your poke
 "With full release from the false wife, to boot,
 "And heading, hanging for the priest, beside —
 30 "Or, contrary, claim freedom for the wife,
 "Repayment of each penny paid her spouse,
 Amends for the past, release for the future! Such
 "Is wisdom to the children of this world;
 "But we've no mind, we children of the light,
 "To miss the advantage of the golden mean,
 "And push things to the steel point."
 Thus the courts.
- X Is it settled so far? Settled or disturbed,
 Console yourselves: 'tis like . . . an instance, now!
 You've seen the puppets, of Place Navona, play, —
 Punch and his mate, — how threats pass, 40
 blows are dealt,
 And a crisis comes: the crowd or clap or hiss
 Accordingly as disposed for man or wife —
 When down the actors duck awhile perdue,
 Donning what novel rag-and-feather trim
 Best suits the next adventure, new effect:
 And, — by the time the mob is on the move,
 With something like a judgment *pro* and *con*, —
 There's a whistle, up again the actors pop
 In t'other tatter with fresh-tinseled staves,
 To re-engage in one last worst fight more 50
 Shall show, what you thought tragedy was farce.
 Note, that the climax and the crown of things
 Invariably is, the devil appears himself,
 Armed and accoutred, horns and hoofs and tail!
 Just so, nor otherwise it proved — you'll see:
 Move to the murder, never mind the rest!
 Guido, at such a general duck-down,
 I' the breathing-space, — of wife to convent here,
 Priest to his relegation, and himself
 To Arezzo, — had resigned his part per- 60
 force
 To brother Abate, who bustled, did his best,
 Retrieved things somewhat, managed the three suits —
 Since, it should seem, there were three suits-at-law
 Behoved him look to, still, lest bad grow worse:
 First civil suit, — the one the parents brought,
 Impugning the legitimacy of his wife,
 Affirming thence the nullity of her rights:
 This was before the Rota, — Molinès,
 That's judge there, made that notable decree
 Which partly leaned to Guido, as I said, — 70
 But Pietro had appealed against the same
 To the very court will judge what we judge now —
 Tommati and his fellows, — Suit the first.
 Next civil suit, — demand on the wife's part
 Of separation from the husband's bed
 On plea of cruelty and risk to life —
 Claims restitution of the dowry paid,
 Immunity from paying any more:
 This second, the Vicegerent has to judge

Third and last suit, — this time, a criminal
one, —

Answer to, and protection from, both
these, —

Guido's complaint of guilt against his wife
In the Tribunal of the Governor,

Venturini, also judge of the present cause.
Three suits of all importance plaguing him,

Beside a little private enterprise
Of Guido's, — essay at a shorter cut.

For Paolo, knowing the right way at Rome,
10 Had, even while superintending these three
suits

I' the regular way, each at its proper court,
Ingenuously made interest with the Pope

To set such tedious regular forms aside,
And, acting the supreme and ultimate

judge,
Declare for the husband and against the

wife.
Well, at such crisis and extreme of

straits, —
The man at bay, buffeted in this wise, —

Happened the strangest accident of all.
"Then," sigh friends, "the last feather

broke his back,
20 "Made him forget all possible remedies

"Save one — he rushed to, as the sole relief
"From horror and the abominable thing."

"Or rather," laugh foes, "then did there
befall

"The luckiest of conceivable events,
"Most pregnant with impunity for him,

"Which henceforth turned the flank of all
attack,

"And bade him do his wickedest and
worst."

— The wife's withdrawal from the Con-
vertites,

Visit to the villa where her parents lived,
30 And birth there of his babe. Divergence
here!

I simply take the facts, ask what they show.
First comes this thunderclap of a surprise:

Then follow all the signs and silences
Premonitory of earthquake. Paolo first

Vanished, was swept off somewhere, lost to
Rome:

(Wells dry up, while the sky is sunny and
blue.)

Then Guido girds himself for enterprise,
Hies to Vittiano, counsels with his steward,

Comes to terms with four peasants young
and bold,

40 And starts for Rome the Holy, reaches her
At very holiest, for 'tis Christmas Eve,
And makes straight for the Abate's dried-

up font,
The lodge where Paolo ceased to work the

pipes.
And then, rest taken, observation made

And plan completed, all in a grim week,
The five proceed in a body, reach the place,

— Pietro's, at the Paolina, silent, lone,
And stupefied by the propitious snow.

'Tis one i' the evening: knock: a voice
"Who's there?"

"Friends with a letter from the priest your 50
friend."

At the door, straight smiles old Violante's
self.

She falls, — her son-in-law stabs through
and through,

Reaches through her at Pietro — "With
your son

"This is the way to settle suits, good
sire!"

He bellows "Mercy for heaven, not for
earth!

"Leave to confess and save my sinful soul,
"Then do your pleasure on the body of

me!"
— "Nay, father, soul with body must take

its chance!"
He presently got his portion and lay still.

And last, Pompilia rushes here and there 60
Like a dove among the lightnings in her

brake,
Falls also: Guido's, this last husband's-

act.
He lifts her by the long dishevelled hair,

Holds her away at arm's length with one
hand,

While the other tries if life come from the
mouth —

Looks out his whole heart's hate on the
shut eyes,

Draws a deep satisfied breath, "So —
dead at last!"

Throws down the burden on dead Pietro's
knees,

And ends all with "Let us away, my
boys!"

And, as they left by one door, in at the other 70
Tumbled the neighbours — for the shrieks

had pierced
To the mill and the grange, this cottage

and that shed.
Soon followed the Public Force; pursuit

began
Though Guido had the start and chose

the road:
So, that same night was he, with the other

four,
Overtaken near Baccano — where they

sank
By the way-side, in some shelter meant for

beasts,
And now lay heaped together, nuzzling

swine,
Each wrapped in bloody cloak, each grasp-

ing still
His unwiped weapon, sleeping all the 80
same

The sleep o' the just, — a journey of
twenty miles

Brought just and unjust to a level, you see.
The only one i' the world that suffered
aught

By the whole night's toil and trouble, flight
and chase,

Was just the officer who took them, Head
O' the Public Force,—Patrizj, zealous soul,
Who, having but duty to sustain weak flesh,
Got heated, caught a fever and so died:

A warning to the over-vigilant,
—Virtue in a chafe should change her
linen quick,

10 Lest pleurisy get start of providence.
(That's for the Cardinal, and told, I
think!)

Well, they bring back the company to
Rome.

Says Guido, "By your leave, I fain would
ask

"How you found out 'twas I who did the
deed?

"What put you on my trace, a foreigner,
"Supposed in Arezzo,—and assuredly safe
"Except for an oversight: who told you,
pray?"

"Why, naturally your wife!" Down
Guido drops

O' the horse he rode,—they have to
steady and stay,

20 At either side the brute that bore him,
bound,

So strange it seemed his wife should live
and speak!

She had prayed—at least so people tell
you now—

For but one thing to the Virgin for herself,
Not simply,—as did Pietro 'mid the
stabs,—

Time to confess and get her own soul
saved—

But time to make the truth apparent,
truth

For God's sake, lest men should believe a
lie:

Which seems to have been about the single
prayer

She ever put up, that was granted her.

40 With this hope in her head, of telling
truth,—

Being familiarized with pain, beside,—
She bore the stabbing to a certain pitch
Without a useless cry, was flung for dead
On Pietro's lap, and so attained her point.
Her friends subjoin this—have I done
with them?—

And cite the miracle of continued life
(She was not dead when I arrived just now)
As attestation to her probity.

Does it strike your Excellency? Why,
your Highness,

40 The self-command and even the final
prayer,

Our candour must acknowledge explicable
As easily by the consciousness of guilt.

So, when they add that her confession runs
She was of wifehood one white innocence
In thought, word, act, from first of her
short life

To last of it; praying, i' the face of death,
That God forgive her other sins—not this,
She is charged with and must die for,
that she failed

Anyway to her husband: while thereon
Comments the old Religious—"So much 50
good,

"Patience beneath enormity of ill,

"I hear to my confusion, woe is me,

"Sinner that I stand, shamed in the walk
and gait

"I have practised and grown old in, by a
child!"—

Guido's friends shrug the shoulder, "Just
this same

"Prodigious absolute calm in the last hour

"Confirms us,—being the natural result

"Of a life which proves consistent to the
close.

"Having braved heaven and deceived earth
throughout,

"She braves still and deceives still, gains 60
thereby

"Two ends, she prizes beyond earth or
heaven:

"First sets her lover free, imperilled sore

"By the new turn things take: he answers
yet

"For the part he played: they have
summoned him indeed:

"The past ripped up, he may be punished
still:

"What better way of saving him than this?

"Then,—thus she dies revenged to the
utmost

"On Guido, drags him with her in the
dark,

"The lower still the better, do you doubt?

"Thus, two ways, does she love her love 70
to the end,

"And hate her hate,—death, hell is no
such price

"To pay for these,—lovers and haters
hold."

But there's another parry for the thrust.

"Confession," cry folks—"a confession,
think!

"Confession of the moribund is true!"

Which of them, my wise friends? This
public one,

Or the private other we shall never know?

The private may contain,—your casuists
teach,—

The acknowledgment of, and the penitence
for,

That other public one, so people say.

80 However it be,—we trench on delicate
ground,

Her Eminence is peeping o'er the cards, —
 Can one find nothing in behalf of this
 Catastrophe? Deaf folks accuse the
 dumb!
 You criticize the drunken reel, fool's speech,
 Maniacal gesture of the man, — we grant!
 But who poured poison in his cup, we ask?
 Recall the list of his excessive wrongs,
 First cheated in his wife, robbed by her kin,
 Rendered anon the laughing-stock o' the
 world
 10 By the story, true or false, of his wife's
 birth, —
 The last seal publicly apposed to shame
 By the open flight of wife and priest, —
 why, Sirs,
 Step out of Rome a furlong, would you
 know
 What another guess tribunal than ours here,
 Mere worldly Court without the help of
 grace,
 Thinks of just that one incident o' the
 flight?
 Guido preferred the same complaint before
 The court at Arezzo, bar of the Granduke, —
 In virtue of it being Tuscany
 20 Where the offence had rise and flight
 began, —
 Self-same complaint he made in the sequel
 here
 Where the offence grew to the full, the
 flight
 Ended: offence and flight, one fact judged
 twice
 By two distinct tribunals, — what result?
 There was a sentence passed at the same
 time
 By Arezzo and confirmed by the Granduke,
 Which nothing baulks of swift and sure
 effect
 But absence of the guilty, (flight to Rome
 Frees them from Tuscan jurisdiction now)
 30 — Condemns the wife to the opprobrious
 doom
 Of all whom law just lets escape from
 death.
 The Stinche, House of Punishment, for
 life, —
 That's what the wife deserves in Tuscany:
 Here, she deserves — remitting with a
 smile
 To her father's house, main object of the
 flight!
 The thief presented with the thing he steals!
 At this discrepancy of judgments — mad,
 The man took on himself the office, judged
 And the only argument against the use
 40 O' the law he thus took into his own hands
 Is . . . what, I ask you? — that, reveng-
 ing wrong,
 He did not revenge sooner, kill at first
 Whom he killed last! That is the final
 charge.

Sooner? What's soon or late i' the case? —
 ask we.
 A wound i' the flesh no doubt wants prompt
 redress;
 It smarts a little to-day, well in a week,
 Forgotten in a month; or never, or now,
 revenge!
 But a wound to the soul? That rankles
 worse and worse.
 Shall I comfort you, explaining — “Not
 this once
 “But now it may be some five hundred 50
 times
 “I, called you ruffian, pandar, liar and
 rogue:
 “The injury must be less by lapse of time?”
 The wrong is a wrong, one and immortal
 too,
 And that you bore it these five hundred
 times,
 Let it rankle unrevengeed five hundred
 years,
 Is just five hundred wrongs the more and
 worse!
 Men, plagued this fashion, get to explode
 this way,
 If left no other.

“But we left this man
 “Many another way, and there's his fault,”
 'Tis answered — “He himself preferred 60
 our arm
 “O' the law to fight his battle with. No
 doubt
 “We did not open him an armoury
 “To pick and choose from, use, and then
 reject.
 “He tries one weapon and fails, — he tries
 the next
 “And next: he flourishes wit and common
 sense,
 “They fail him, — he plies logic doughtily,
 “It fails him too, — thereon, discovers last
 “He has been blind to the combustibles —
 “That all the while he is aglow with ire,
 “Boiling with irrepressible rage, and so 70
 “May try explosives and discard cold
 steel, —
 “So hires assassins, plots, plans, executes!
 “Is this the honest self-forgetting rage
 “We are called to pardon? Does the
 furious bull
 “Pick out four help-mates from the graz-
 ing herd
 “And journey with them over hill and dale
 “Till he find his enemy?”

What rejoinder? save
 That friends accept our bull-similitude.
 Bull-like, — the indiscriminate slaughter,
 rude
 And reckless aggravation of revenge, 8c
 Were all i' the way o' the brute who never
 once

Ceases, amid all provocation more,
To bear in mind the first tormentor, first
Giver o' the wound that goaded him to
fight:

And, though a dozen follow and reinforce
The aggressor, wound in front and wound
in flank,

Continues undisturbedly pursuit,
And only after prostrating his prize
Turns on the pettier, makes a general
prey.

So Guido rushed against Violante, first
10 Author of his wrongs, *fons et origo*
Malorum — drops first, deluge since, —
which done,

He finished with the rest. Do you blame
a bull?

In truth you look as puzzled as ere I
preached!

How is that? There are difficulties per-
haps

On any supposition, and either side.
Each party wants too much, claims sym-
pathy

For its object of compassion, more than
just.

Cry the wife's friends, "O the enormous
crime

"Caused by no provocation in the world!"

20 "Was not the wife a little weak?" — in-
quire —

"Punished extravagantly, if you please,

"But meriting a little punishment?

"One treated inconsiderately, say,

"Rather than one deserving not at all

"Treatment and discipline o' the harsher
sort?"

No, they must have her purity itself,
Quite angel, — and her parents angels too
Of an aged sort, immaculate, word and
deed:

At all events, so seeming, till the fiend,
30 Even Guido, by his folly, forced from them
The untoward avowal of the trick o' the
birth,

Which otherwise were safe and secret now.
Why, here you have the awfulest of crimes
For nothing! Hell broke loose on a
butterfly

A dragon born of rose-dew and the moon!
Yet here is the monster! Why he's a mere
man —

Born, bred and brought up in the usual
way.

His mother loves him, still his brothers stick
To the good fellow of the boyish games;

40 The Governor of his town knows and ap-
proves,

The Archbishop of the place knows and
assists:

Here he has Cardinal This to vouch for
the past,

Cardinal That to trust for the future, —
match

And marriage were a Cardinal's making, —
in short,

What if a tragedy be acted here
Impossible for malice to improve,
And innocent Guido with his innocent four
Be added, all five, to the guilty three,
That we of these last days be edified
With one full taste o' the justice of the 50
world?

The long and the short is, truth seems what
I show: —

Undoubtedly no pains ought to be spared
To give the mob an inkling of our lights.
It seems unduly harsh to put the man
To the torture, as I hear the court intends,
Though readiest way of twisting out the
truth;

He is noble, and he may be innocent.

On the other hand, if they exempt the man
(As it is also said they hesitate

On the fair ground, presumptive guilt is 60
weak

I' the case of nobility and privilege), —
What crime that ever was, ever will be,
Deserves the torture? Then abolish it!
You see the reduction *ad absurdum*, Sirs?

Her Excellency must pronounce, in fine!

What, she prefers going and joining play?

Her Highness finds it late, intends retire?

I am of their mind: only, all this talk
talked,

'Twas not for nothing that we talked, I
hope?

Both know as much about it, now, at least, 70

As all Rome: no particular thanks, I beg!

(You'll see, I have not so advanced myself,

After my teaching the two idiots here!)

V. — COUNT GUIDO FRANCESCHINI.

THANKS, Sir, but, should it please the
reverend Court,

I feel I can stand somehow, half sit down
Without help, make shift to even speak, you
see,

Fortified by the sip of . . . why, 'tis wine,
Velletri, — and not vinegar and gall,

So changed and good the times grow!
Thanks, kind Sir!

Oh, but one sip's enough! I want my head 80
To save my neck, there's work awaits me
still.

How cautious and considerate . . . aie,
aie, aie,

Nor your fault, sweet Sir! Come, you
take to heart

An ordinary matter. Law is law.

Noblemen were exempt, the vulgar thought,
From racking; but, since law thinks other-
wise,

I have been put to the rack: all's over now,

And neither wrist — what men style, out
of joint:
If any harm be, 'tis the shoulder-blade,
The left one, that seems wrong i' the socket,
— Sirs,
Much could not happen, I was quick to
faint,
Being past my prime of life, and out of
health.
In short, I thank you, — yes, and mean the
word.
Needs must the Court be slow to under-
stand
How this quite novel form of taking pain,
This getting tortured merely in the flesh,
Amounts to almost an agreeable change
In my case, me fastidious, plied too much
With opposite treatment, used (forgive the
joke)
To the rasp-tooth toying with this brain of
mine,
And, in and out my heart, the play o' the
probe.
Four years have I been operated on
I' the soul, do you see — its tense or
tremulous part —
My self-respect, my care for a good name,
Pride in an old one, love of kindred — just
A mother, brothers, sisters, and the like,
That looked up to my face when days were
dim,
And fancied they found light there — no
one spot,
Foppishly sensitive, but has paid its pang.
That, and not this you now oblige me with,
That was the Vigil-torment, if you please!
The poor old noble House that drew the
rags
O' the Franceschini's once superb array
Close round her, hoped to slink unchal-
lenged by, —
Pluck off these! Turn the drapery inside
out
And teach the tittering town how scarlet
wears!
Show men the lucklessness, the improvi-
dence
Of the easy-natured Count before this
Court,
The father I have some slight feeling for,
Who let the world slide, nor foresaw that
friends
Then proud to cap and kiss their patron's
shoe,
Would, when the purse he left held spider-
webs,
Properly push his child to wall one
day!
Mimic the tetchy humour, furtive glance,
And brow where half was furious, half
fatigued,
O' the same son got to be of middle age,
Sour, saturnine, — your humble servant
here, —

When things go cross and the young wife,
he finds
Take to the window at a whistle's bid,
And yet demurs thereon, preposterous
fool! —
Whereat the worthies judge he wants ad-
vice
And beg to civilly ask what's evil here,
Perhaps remonstrate on the habit they
deem
He's given unduly to, of beating her:
. . . Oh, sure he beats her — why says
John so else,
Who is cousin to George who is sib to
Tecla's self
Who cooks the meal and combs the lady's 50
hair?
What! 'Tis my wrist you merely dislocate
For the future when you mean me martyr-
dom?
— Let the old mother's ecoromy alone,
How the brocade-strips saved o' the steamy
side
O' the wedding-gown buy raiment for a
year?
— How she can dress and dish up —
lordly dish
Fit for a duke, lamb's head and purte-
nance —
With her proud hands, feast household
so a week?
No word o' the wine rejoicing God and
man
The less when three-parts water? Then, 60
I say,
A trifle of torture to the flesh, like yours,
While soul is spared such foretaste of
hell-fire,
Is naught. But I curtail the catalogue
Through policy, — a rhetorician's trick, —
Because I would reserve some choicer
points
O' the practice, more exactly parallel
(Having an eye to climax) with what
gift,
Eventual grace the Court may have in store
I' the way of plague — what crown of
punishments.
When I am hanged or headed, time enough 70
To prove the tenderness of only that,
Mere heading, hanging, — not their coun-
terpart,
Not demonstration public and precise
That I, having married the mongrel of a
drab,
Am bound to grant that mongrel-brat, my
wife,
Her mother's birthright-licence as is just, —
Let her sleep undisturbed, i' the family
style,
Her sleep out in the embraces of a priest,
Nor disallow their bastard as my heir!
Your sole mistake, — dare I submit so 80
much

To the reverend Court? — has been in all
this pains
To make a stone roll down hill, — rack
and wrench
And rend a man to pieces, all for what?
Why — make him ope mouth in his own
defence,

Show cause for what he has done, the
irregular deed,
(Since that he did it, scarce dispute can
be)

And clear his fame a little, beside the luck
Of stopping even yet, if possible,
Discomfort to his flesh from noose or axe —

10 For that, out come the implements of
law!

May it content my lords the gracious Court
To listen only half so patient-long
As I will in that sense profusely speak,
And — fie, they shall not call in screws to
help!

X I killed Pompilia Franceschini, Sirs;
Killed too the Comparini, husband, wife,
Who called themselves, by a notorious lie,
Her father and her mother to ruin me.
There's the irregular deed: you want no
more

20 Than right interpretation of the same,
And truth so far — am I to understand?
To that then, with convenient speed, —
because

Now I consider, — yes, despite my boast,
There is an ailing in this omoplat¹
May clip my speech all too abruptly short,
Whatever the good-will in me. Now for
truth!

I' the name of the indivisible Trinity!
Will my lords, in the plenitude of their
light,

Weigh well that all this trouble has come
on me

30 Through my persistent treading in the
paths

Where I was trained to go, — wearing that
yoke

My shoulder was predestined to receive,
Born to the hereditary stoop and crease?
Noble, I recognised my nobler still;
The Church, my suzerain; no mock-mis-
tress, she;

The secular owned the spiritual: mates of
mine

Have thrown their careless hoofs up at her
call

"Forsake the clover and come drag my
wain!"

There they go cropping: I protruded nose

40 To halter, bent my back of docile beast,
And now am wheeled, one wide wound all
of me,

For being found at the eleventh hour o' the
day

Padding the mill-track, not neck-deep in
grass:

— My one fault, I am stiffened by my
work,

— My one reward, I help the Court to
smile!

I am representative of a great line,
One of the first of the old families
In Arezzo, ancientest of Tuscan towns.
When my worst foe is fain to challenge this,
His worst exception runs — not first in 50
rank

But second, noble in the next degree
Only; not malice's self maligns me more.
So, my lord opposite has composed, we
know,

A marvel of a book, sustains the point
That Francis boasts the primacy 'mid
saints;

Yet not inaptly hath his argument
Obtained response from yon my other lord
In thesis published with the world's ap-
plause

— Rather 'tis Dominic such post befits:
Why, at the worst, Francis stays Francis 60
still,

Second in rank to Dominic it may be,
Still, very saintly, very like our Lord;
And I at least descend from Guido once
Homager to the Empire, nought below —
Of which account as proof that, none o'
the line

Having a single gift beyond brave blood,
Or able to do ought but give, give, give
In blood and brain, in house and land and
cash,

Not get and garner as the vulgar may,
We became poor as Francis or our Lord. 70
Be that as it likes you, Sirs, — whenever it
chanced

Myself grew 'capable anyway of remark,
(Which was soon — penury makes wit
premature)

This struck me, I was poor who should
be rich

Or pay that fault to the world which trifles
not

When lineage lacks the flag yet lifts the
pole:

On, therefore, I must move forthwith,
transfer

My stranded self, born fish with gill and fin
Fit for the deep sea, now left flap bare-
backed

In slush and sand, a show to crawlers vile 80
Reared of the low-tide and aright therein.

The enviable youth with the old name,
Wide chest, stout arms, sound brow and
pricking veins,

A heartful of desire, man's natural load,
A brainful of belief, the noble's lot, —

All this life, cramped and gasping, high and
dry

¹ Omoplat: shoulder-blade.

- I the wave's retreat, — the misery, good
my lords,
Which made you merriment at Rome of
late, —
It made me reason, rather — muse, de-
mand
— Why our bare dropping palace, in the
street
Where such-an-one whose grandfather sold
tripe
Was adding to his purchased pile a fourth
Tall tower, could hardly show a turret
sound?
Why Countess Beatrice, whose son I am,
Cowered in the winter-time as she spun
flax,
14 Blew on the earthen basket of live ash,
Instead of jaunting forth in coach and six
Like such-another widow who ne'er was
wed?
I asked my fellows, how came this about?
"Why, Jack, the suttler's child, perhaps the
camp's,
"Went to the wars, fought sturdily, took
a town
"And got rewarded as was natural.
"She of the coach and six — excuse me
there!
"Why, don't you know the story of her
friend?
"A clown dressed vines on somebody's
estate.
20 "His boy recoiled from muck, liked Latin
more,
"Stuck to his pen and got to be a priest,
"Till one day . . . don't you mind that
telling tract
"Against Molinos, the old Cardinal wrote?
"He penned and dropped it in the patron's
desk
"Who, deep in thought and absent much of
mind,
"Licensed the thing, allowed it for his
own;
"Quick came promotion, — *sum cuique*,
Count!
"Oh, he can pay for coach and six, be
sure!"
"— Well, let me go, do likewise: war's the
word.—
30 "That way the Franceschini worked at
first,
"I'll take my turn, try soldiership."—
"What, you?
"The eldest son and heir and prop o' the
house,
"So do you see your duty? Here's your
post,
"Hard by the hearth and altar. (Roam
from roof,
"This youngster, play the gipsy out of
doors,
"And who keeps kith and kin that fall on
us?)
- "Stand fast, stick tight, conserve your gods
at home!"
"— Well then, the quiet course, the con-
trary trade!
"We had a cousin amongst us once was
Pope,
"And minor glories manifold. Try the 40
Church,
"The tonsure, and, — since heresy's but
half-slain
"Even by the Cardinal's tract he thought
he wrote, —
"Have at Molinos!" — "Have at a fool's
head!
"You a priest? How were marriage pos-
sible?
"There must be Franceschini till time
ends —
"That's your vocation. Make your
brothers priests,
"Paul shall be porporate,¹ and Girolamo
step
"Red-stockinged in the presence when
you choose,
"But save one Franceschini for the age!
"Be not the vine but dig and dung its 51
root,
"Be not a priest but gird up priesthood's
loins,
"With one foot in Arezzo stride to Rome,
"Spend yourself there and bring the pur-
chase back!
"Go hence to Rome, be guided!"
- So I was.
- I turned alike from the hill-side zig-zag
thread
Of way to the table-land a soldier takes,
Alike from the low-lying pasture-place
Where churchmen graze, recline and rumi-
nate,
— Ventured to mount no platform like
my lords
Who judge the world, bear brain I dare not 60
brag —
But stationed me, might thus the expres-
sion serve,
As who should fetch and carry, come and
go,
Meddle and make i' the cause my lords love
most —
The public weal, which hangs to the law,
which holds
By the Church, which happens to be
through God himself.
Humbly I helped the Church till here I
stand, —
Or would stand but for the omoplat, you
see!
Bidden qualify for Rome, I, having a field,
Went, sold it, laid the sum at Peter's foot:
- ¹ Porporate' wearing purple, the colour of
a cardinal.

Which means — I settled home-accounts
with speed,
Set apart just a modicum should suffice
To hold the villa's head above the waves
Of weed inundating its oil and wine,
And prop roof, stanchion wall o' the palace
so

As to keep breath i' the body, out of heart
Amid the advance of neighbouring lofti-
ness —

(People like building where they used to
beg) —

Till succoured one day, — shared the
residue

10 Between my mother and brothers and
sisters there,

Black-eyed babe Donna This and Donna
That,

As near to starving as might decently be,
— Left myself journey-charges, change of
suit,

A purse to put i' the pocket of the Groom
O' the Chamber of the patron, and a glove
With a ring to it for the digits of the niece
Sure to be helpful in his household, — then
Started for Rome, and led the life pre-
scribed.

Close to the Church, though clean of it, I
assumed

20 Three or four orders of no consequence,
— They cast out evil spirits and exorcise,
For example; bind a man to nothing more,
Give clerical savour to his layman's-salt,
Facilitate his claim to loaf and fish
Should miracle leave, beyond what feeds
the flock,

Fragments to brim the basket of a friend —
While, for the world's sake, I rode, danced
and gamed,

Quitted me like a courtier, measured mine
With whatsoever blade had fame in fence,

30 — Ready to let the basket go its round
Even though my turn was come to help
myself,

Should Dives count on me at dinner-time
As just the understander of a joke
And not immoderate in repartee.

Utrique sic paratus,¹ Sirs, I said,

"Here," (in the fortitude of years fifteen,
So good a pedagogue is penury)

"Here wait, do service, — serving and to
serve!

"And, in due time, I nowise doubt at all,

40 "The recognition of my service comes.

"Next year I'm only sixteen. I can wait."

I waited thirty years, may it please the
Court:

Saw meanwhile many a denizen o' the dung
Hop, skip, jump o'er my shoulder, make
him wings

¹ *Utrique sic paratus*: "thus prepared for
either (Church or world)."

And fly aloft, — succeed, in the usual
phrase,

Every one soon or late comes round by
Rome:

Stand still here, you'll see all in turn suc-
ceed.

Why, look you, so and so, the physician
here,

My father's lacquey's son we sent to school,
Doctored and dosed this Eminence and 50

that,
Salved the last Pope his certain obstinate
sore,

Soon bought land as became him, names it
now:

I grasp bell at his griffin-guarded gate,
Traverse the half-mile avenue, — a term,²

A cypress, and a statue, three and three, —
Deliver message from my Monsignor,

With varlety at lounge i' the vestibule
I'm barred from who bear mud upon my

shoe.
My father's chaplain's nephew, Chamber-
lain, —

Nothing less, please you! — courteous all 60
the same,

— He does not see me though I wait an
hour

At his staircase-landing 'twixt the brace of
busts,

A noseless Sylla, Marius maimed to match,
My father gave him for a hexastich³

Made on my birthday, — but he sends me
down,

To make amends, that relic I prize most —
The unburnt end o' the very candle, Sirs,

Purpled with paint so prettily round and
round,

He carried in such state last Peter's-day, —
In token I, his gentleman and squire, 70

Had held the bridle, walked his managed
mule

Without a tittup the procession through.
Nay, the official, — one you know, sweet
lords! —

Who drew the warrant for my transfer late
To the New Prisons from Tordinona, —

Graciously had remembrance — "Fran-
cesc . . . ha?

"His sire, now — how a thing shall come
about! —

"Paid me a dozen florins above the fee,
"For drawing deftly up a deed of sale

"When troubles fell so thick on him, good 80
heart,

"And I was prompt and pushing! By all
means!

"At the New Prisons be it his son shall
lie, —

² *Term*: a figure of Terminus, the god of
boundaries, consisting of only a bust, ending in
a rectangular pedestal.

³ *Hexastich*: stanza of six lines.

"Anything for an old friend!" and thereat
Signed name with triple flourish under-
neath.

These were my fellows, such their fortunes
now,

While I — kept fasts and feasts innumera-
ble,

Matins and vespers, functions to no end
I' the train of Monsignor and Eminence,
As gentleman-squire, and for my zeal's
reward

Have rarely missed a place at the table-
foot

Except when some Ambassador, or such
like,

20 Brought his own people. Brief, one day I
felt

The tick of time inside me, turning-point
And slight sense there was now enough of
this:

That I was near my seventh climacteric,
Hard upon, if not over, the middle life,
And, although fed by the east-wind,
fulsome-fine

With foretaste of the Land of Promise, still
My gorge gave symptom it might play me
false;

Better not press it further, — be content
With living and dying only a nobleman,

20 Who merely had a father great and rich,
Who simply had one greater and richer yet,
And so on back and back till first and best
Began i' the night; I finish in the day.

"The mother must be getting old," I said;

"The sisters are well wedded away, our
name

"Can manage to pass a sister off, at need,
"And do for dowry: both my brothers
thrive —

"Regular priests they are, nor, bat-like,
'bide

"Twixt flesh and fowl with neither priv-
ilege.

30 "My spare revenue must keep me and mine.

"I am tired: Arezzo's air is good to breathe:

"Vittiano; — one limes flocks of thrushes
there;

"A leathern coat costs little and lasts long:

"Let me bid hope good-bye, content at
home!"

Thus, one day, I disbosomed me and
bowed.

Whereat began the little buzz and thrill
O' the gazers round me; each face bright-
ened up:

As when at your Casino, deep in dawn,
A gamester says at last, "I play no more,

40 "Forego gain, acquiesce in loss, withdraw

"Anyhow:" and the watchers of his ways,
A trifle struck compunctious at the word,
Yet sensible of relief, breathe free once
more,

Break up the ring, venture polite advice —

"How, Sir? So scant of heart and hope
indeed?

"Retire with neither cross nor pile from
play? —

"So incurious, so short-casting? — give
your chance

"To a younger, stronger, bolder spirit be-
like,

"Just when luck turns and the fine throw
sweeps all?"

Such was the chorus: and its goodwill 50
meant —

"See that the loser leave door handsomely!

"There's an ill look, — it's sinister, spoils
sport,

"When an old bruised and battered year-
by-year

"Fighter with fortune, not a penny in poke,

"Reels down the steps of our establish-
ment

"And staggers on broad daylight and the
world,

"In shagrag beard and doleful doublet,
drops

"And breaks his heart on the outside:
people prate

"Such is the profit of a trip upstairs!"

"Contrive he sidle forth, baulked of the 60
blow

"Best dealt by way of moral, bidding down

"No curse but blessings rather on our heads

"For some poor prize he bears at tattered
breast,

"Some palpable sort of kind of good to set

"Over and against the grievance: give him
quick!"

Whereon protested Paul, "Go hang your-
selves!

"Leave him to me. Count Guido and
brother of mine,

"A word in your ear! Take courage,
since faint heart

"Ne'er won . . . aha, fair lady, don't
men say?

"There's a *sors*, there's a right Virgilian dip! 70

"Do you see the happiness o' the hint?
At worst,

"If the Church want no more of you, the
Court

"No more, and the Camp as little, the in-
grates, — come,

"Count you are counted: still you've coat
to back,

"Not cloth of gold and tissue, as we hoped,
"But cloth with sparks and spangles on its
frieze

"From Camp, Court, Church, enough to
make a shine,

"Entitle you to carry home a wife

"With the proper dowry, let the worst
betide!

"Why, it was just a wife you meant to 80
take!"

Now, Paul's advice was weighty: priests should know:

And Paul apprised me, ere the week was out,

That Pietro and Violante, the easy pair,
The cits enough, with stomach to be more,
Had just the daughter and exact the sum
To truck for the quality of myself: "She's
young,

"Pretty and rich: you're noble, classic,
choice.

"Is it to be a match?" "A match," said I.
Done! He proposed all, I accepted all,

10 And we performed all. So I said and did
Simply. As simply followed, not at first
But with the outbreak of misfortune, still
One comment on the saying and doing —
"What?

"No blush at the avowal you dared buy
"A girl of age beseems your grand-
daughter,

"Like ox or ass? Are flesh and blood
a ware?

"Are heart and soul a chattel?"

Softly, Sirs!

Will the Court of its charity teach poor me
Anxious to learn, of any way i' the world,
20 Allowed by custom and convenience, save
This same which, taught from my youth
up, I trod?

Take me along with you; where was the
wrong step?

If what I gave in barter, style and state
And all that hangs to Franceschinihood,
Were worthless, — why, society goes to
ground,

Its rules are idiot's-rambling. Honour of
birth, —

If that thing has no value, cannot buy
Something with value of another sort,
You've no reward nor punishment to give

30 I' the giving or the taking honour; straight
Your social fabric, pinnacle to base,
Comes down a-clatter like a house of cards.
Get honour, and keep honour free from
flaw,

Aim at still higher honour, — gabble o' the
goose!

Go bid a second blockhead like myself
Spend fifty years in guarding bubbles of
breath,

Soapsuds with air i' the belly, gilded brave,
Guarded and guided, all to break at touch
O' the first young girl's hand and first old
fool's purse!

40 All my privation and endurance, all
Love, loyalty and labour dared and did,
Fiddle-de-dee! — why, doer and darer
both, —

Count Guido Franceschini had hit the
mark

Far better, spent his life with more effect,
As a dancer or a prizer, trades that pay!

On the other hand, bid this buffoonery
cease,

Admit that honour is a privilege,
The question follows, privilege worth
what?

Why, worth the market-price, — now up,
now down,

Just so with this as with all other ware: 50

Therefore essay the market, sell your name,
Style and condition to who buys them best!

"Does my name purchase," had I dared
inquire,

"Your niece, my lord?" there would have
been rebut!

Though courtesy, your Lordship cannot
else

"Not altogether! Rank for rank may
stand:

"But I have wealth beside, you — pov-
erty;

"Your scale flies up there: bid a second
bid

"Rank too and wealth too!" Reasoned
like yourself!

But was it to you I went with goods to sell? 60

This time 'twas my scale quietly kissed the
ground,

Mere rank against mere wealth — some
youth beside,

Some beauty too, thrown into the bargain,
just

As the buyer likes or lets alone. I thought
To deal o' the square: others find fault, it
seems:

The thing is, those my offer most con-
cerned,

Pietro, Violante, cried they fair or foul?

What did they make o' the terms? Pre-
posterous terms?

Why then accede so promptly, close with
such

Nor take a minute to chaffer? Bargain 70
struck,

They straight grew bilious, wished their
money back,

Repented them, no doubt: why, so did I,
So did your Lordship, if town-talk be true,
Of paying a full farm's worth for that
piece

By Pietro of Cortona — probably
His scholar Ciro Ferri may have re-
touched —

You caring more for colour than design —
Getting a little tired of cupids too.

That's incident to all the folk who buy!

I am charged, I know, with gilding fact by 80
fraud;

I falsified and fabricated, wrote
Myself down roughly richer than I prove,
Rendered a wrong revenue, — grant it all!
Mere grace, mere coquetry such fraud, I
say:

A flourish round the figures of a sum

For fashion's sake, that deceives nobody.
 The veritable back-bone, understood
 Essence of this same bargain, blank and
 bare,
 Being the exchange of quality for wealth,
 What may such fancy-flights be? Flecks
 of oil
 Flirted by chapmen where plain dealing
 grates.
 I may have dripped a drop — "My name
 I sell;
 "Not but that I too boast my wealth" —
 as they,
 "— We bring you riches; still our ancestor
 10 "Was hardly the rapsallion folk saw
 flogged,
 "But heir to we know who, were rights of
 force!"
 They knew and I knew where the back-
 bone lurked
 I' the writhings of the bargain, lords, be-
 lieve!
 I paid down all engaged for, to a doit,
 Delivered them just that which, their life
 long,
 They hungered in the hearts of them to
 gain —
 Incorporation with nobility thus
 In word and deed: for that they gave me
 wealth.
 But when they came to try their gain, my
 gift,
 20 Quit Rome and qualify for Arezzo, take
 The tone o' the new sphere that absorbed
 the old,
 Put away gossip Jack and goody Joan
 And go become familiar with the Great,
 Greatness to touch and taste and handle
 now, —
 Why then, — they found that all was vān-
 ity,
 Vexation, and what Solomon describes!
 The old abundant city-fare was best,
 The kindly warmth o' the commons, the
 glad clap
 Of the equal on the shoulder, the frank
 grin
 30 Of the underling at all so many spoons
 Fire-new at neighbourly treat, — best, best
 and best
 Beyond compare! — down to the loll itself
 O' the pot-house settle, — better such a
 bench
 Than the stiff crucifixion by my dais
 Under the piecemeal damask canopy
 With the coroneted coat of arms a-top!
 Poverty and privation for pride's sake,
 All they engaged to easily brave and
 bear, —
 With the fit upon them and their brains
 a-work, —
 40 Proved unendurable to the sobered sots.
 A banished prince, now, will exude a juice

And salamander-like support the flame:
 He dines on chestnuts, chucks the husks to
 help
 The broil o' the brazier, pays the due
 baioc,¹
 Goes off light-hearted: his grimace begins
 At the funny humours of the christening-
 feast
 Of friend the money-lender, — then he's
 touched
 By the flame and frizzles at the babe to
 kiss!
 Here was the converse trial, opposite mind:
 Here did a petty nature split on rock 56
 Of vulgar wants predestinate for such —
 One dish at supper and weak wine to
 boot!
 The prince had grinned and borne: the
 citizen shrieked,
 Summoned the neighbourhood to attest the
 wrong,
 Made noisy protest he was murdered, —
 stoned
 And burned and drowned and hanged, —
 then broke away,
 He and his wife, to tell their Rome the rest.
 And this you admire, you men o' the world,
 my lords?
 This moves compassion, makes you doubt
 my faith?
 Why, I appeal to . . . sun and moon? 60
 Not I!
 Rather to Plautus, Terence, Boccaccio's
 Book,
 My townsman, frank Ser Franco's² merry
 Tales, —
 To all who strip a vizard from a face,
 A body from its padding, and a soul
 From froth and ignorance it styles itself, —
 If this be other than the daily hap
 Of purblind greed that dog-like still drops
 bone,
 Grasps shadow, and then howls the case
 is hard!

So much for them so far: now for myself,
 My profit or loss i' the matter: married 70
 am I:
 Text whereon friendly censurs burst to
 preach.
 Ay, at Rome even, long ere I was left
 To regulate her life for my young bride
 Alone at Arezzo, friendliness outbroke
 (Sifting my future to predict its fault)
 "Purchase and sale being thus so plain a
 point,
 "How of a certain soul bound up, may-be,

¹ *Baioc*: about a halfpenny.
² *Ser Franco*: apparently Sacchetti, see p. 741,
 l. 17. Petrarch, to whom the term "townsman"
 better applies (since Sacchetti, though a Tuscan,
 was a Florentine), wrote nothing that can be
 described as "merry tales."

"I' the barter with the body and money-bags?

"From the bride's soul what is it you expect?"

Why, loyalty and obedience, — wish and will

To settle and suit her fresh and plastic mind

To the novel, not disadvantageous mould!

Father and mother shall the woman leave,

Cleave to the husband, be it for weal or woe:

There is the law: what sets this law aside
In my particular case? My friends submit

15 "Guide, guardian, benefactor, — fee, faw, fum,

"The fact is you are forty-five years old,

"Nor very comely even for that age:

"Girls must have boys." Why, let girls say so then,

Nor call the boys and men, who say the same,

Brute this and beast the other as they do!

Come, cards on table! When you chaunt us next

Epithalamium full to overflow

With praise and glory of white womanhood,

The chaste and pure — troll no such lies o'er lip!

20 Put in their stead a crudity or two,
Such short and simple statement of the case

As youth chalks on our walls at spring of year!

No! I shall still think nobler of the sex,
Believe a woman still may take a man

For the short period that his soul wears flesh,

And, for the soul's sake, understand the fault

Of armour frayed by fighting. Tush, it tempts

One's tongue too much! I'll say — the law's the law:

With a wife I look to find all wifeliness,

30 As when I buy, timber and twig, a tree —
I buy the song o' the nightingale inside.

Such was the pact: Pompilia from the first
Broke it, refused from the beginning day

Either in body or soul to cleave to mine,
And published it forthwith to all the world.

No rupture, — you must join ere you can break, —

Before we had cohabited a month
She found I was a devil and no man, —

Made common cause with those who found as much,

40 Her parents, Pietro and Violante, — moved
Heaven and earth to the rescue of all three.

In four months' time, the time o' the parents' stay

Arezzo was a-ringing, bells in a blaze,
With the unimaginable story rife

I' the mouth of man, woman and child — to-wit

My misdemeanour. First the lighter side,
Ludicrous face of things, — how very poor

The Franceschini had become at last,
The meanness and the misery of each shift

To save a soldo,¹ stretch and make ends meet.

Next, the more hateful aspect, — how myself

With cruelty beyond Caligula's
Had stripped and beaten, robbed and murdered them,

The good old couple, I decoyed, abused,
Plundered and then cast out, and happily so,

Since, — in due course the abominable comes, —

Woe worth the poor young wife left lonely here!

Repugnant in my person as my mind,
I sought, — was ever heard of such revenge?

— To lure and bind her to so cursed a couch,

Such co-embrace with sulphur, snake and toad,

That she was fain to rush forth, call the stones

O' the common street to save her, not from hate

Of mine merely, but . . . must I burn my lips

With the blister of the lie? . . . the satyr-love

Of who but my own brother, the young priest,

Too long enforced to lenten fare belike,
Now tempted by the morsel tossed him full

I' the trencher where lay bread and herbs at best.

Mark, this yourselves say! — this, none disallows,

Was charged to me by the universal voice
At the instigation of my four-months' wife! —

And then you ask "Such charges so preferred,

"(Truly or falsely, here concerns us not)
"Pricked you to punish now if not before? —

"Did not the harshness double itself, the hate

"Harden?" I answer "Have it your way and will!"

Say my resentment grew apace: what then?

¹ Soldo: about a penny.

- Do you cry out on the marvel? When I
 find
 That pure smooth egg which, laid within
 my nest,
 Could not but hatch a comfort to us all,
 Issues a cockatrice for me and mine,
 Do you stare to see me stamp o' it?
 Swans are soft:
 Is it not clear that she you call my wife,
 That any wife of any husband, caught
 Whetting a sting like this against his
 breast, —
 Speckled with fragments of the fresh-broke
 shell,
- 10 Married a month and making outcry
 thus, —
 Proves a plague-prodigy to God and man?
 She married: what was it she married for,
 Counted upon and meant to meet thereby?
 "Love" suggests some one, "love, a little
 word
 "Whereof we have not heard one syllable."
 So, the Pompilia, child, girl, wife, in one,
 Wanted the beating pulse, the rolling eye,
 The frantic gesture, the devotion due
 From Thyrsis to Neëra! Guido's love —
- 20 Why not Provençal roses in his shoe,
 Plume to his cap, and trio of guitars
 At casement, with a bravo close beside?
 Good things all these are, clearly claimable
 When the fit price is paid the proper
 way.
 Had it been some friend's wife, now, threw
 her fan
 At my foot, with just this pretty scrap at-
 tached,
 "Shame, death, damnation — fall these as
 they may,
 "So I find you, for a minute! Come this
 eve!"
 — Why, at such sweet self-sacrifice, —
 who knows?
- 30 I might have fired up, found me at my
 post,
 Ardent from head to heel, nor feared
 catch cough.
 Nay, had some other friend's . . . say,
 daughter, tripped
 Upstairs and tumbled flat and frank on me,
 Bareheaded and barefooted, with loose
 hair
 And garments all at large, — cried "Take
 me thus!
 "Duke So-and-So, the greatest man in
 Rome —
 "To escape his hand and heart have I
 broke bounds,
 "Traversed the town and reached you!"
 — then, indeed,
 The lady had not reached a man of ice!
- 40 I would have rummaged, ransacked at the
 word
 Those old odd corners of an empty heart
- For remnants of dim love the long disused,
 And dusty crumbings of romance! But
 here,
 We talk of just a marriage, if you please —
 The every-day conditions and no more;
 Where do these bind me to bestow one
 drop
 Of blood shall dye my wife's true-love-
 knot pink?
 Pompilia was no pigeon, Venus' pet,
 That shuffled from between her pressing
 paps
 To sit on my rough shoulder, — but a 50
 hawk,
 I bought at a hawk's price and carried
 home
 To do hawk's service — at the Rotunda,
 say,
 Where, six o' the callow nestlings in a row,
 You pick and choose and pay the price for
 such.
 I have paid my pound, await my penny's
 worth,
 So, hoodwink, starve and properly train
 my bird,
 And, should she prove a haggard, — twist
 her neck!
 Did I not pay my name and style, my hope
 And trust, my all? Through spending
 these amiss
 I am here! 'Tis scarce the gravity of the 60
 Court
 Will blame me that I never piped a tune,
 Treated my falcon-gentle like my finch.
 The obligation I incurred was just
 To practise mastery, prove my master-
 ship: —
 Pompilia's duty was — submit herself,
 Afford me pleasure, perhaps cure my bile.
 Am I to teach my lords what marriage
 means,
 What God ordains thereby and man fulfils
 Who, docile to the dictate, treads the
 house?
 My lords have chosen the happier part 70
 with Paul
 And neither marry nor burn, — yet priest-
 liness
 Can find a parallel to the marriage-bond
 In its own blessed special ordinance
 Whereof indeed was marriage made the
 type:
 The Church may show her insubordinate,
 As marriage her refractory. How of the
 Monk
 Who finds the claustral regimen too
 sharp
 After the first month's essay? What's
 the mode
 With the Deacon who supports indiffer-
 ently
 The rod o' the Bishop when he tastes its 80
 smart

Full four weeks? Do you straightway
slacken hold

Of the innocents, the all-unwary ones
Who, eager to profess, mistook their
mind? —

Remit a fast-day's rigour to the Monk
Who fancied Francis' manna meant roast
quails, —

Concede the Deacon sweet society,
He never thought the Levite-rule re-
nounced, —

Or rather prescribe short chain and sharp
scourge

Corrective of such peccant humours?
This —

10 I take to be the Church's mode, and mine.
If I was over-harsh, — the worse i' the wife
Who did not win from harshness as she
ought,

Wanted the patience and persuasion, lore
Of love, should cure me and console her-
self.

Put case that I mishandle, flurry and
fright

My hawk through clumsiness in sportsman-
ship,

Twitch out five pens where plucking one
would serve —

What, shall she bite and claw to mend the
case?

20 And, if you find I pluck five more for that,
Shall you weep "How he roughs the turtle
there"?

Such was the starting; now of the further
step.

In lieu of taking penance in good part,
The Monk, with hue and cry, summons a
mob

To make a bonfire of the convent, say, —
And the Deacon's pretty piece of virtue
(save

The ears o' the Court! I try to save my
head)

Instructed by the ingenuous postulant,
Taxes the Bishop with adultery, (mud
Needs must pair off with mud, and filth
with filth) —

30 Such being my next experience. Who
knows not —

The couple, father and mother of my wife,
Returned to Rome, published before my
lords,

Put into print, made circulate far and wide
That they had cheated me who cheated
them?

Pompilia, I supposed their daughter, drew
Breath first 'mid Rome's worst rankness,
through the deed

Of a drab and a rogue, was by-blow
bastard-babe

Of a nameless strumpet, passed off,
palm'd on me

As the daughter with the dowry. Daugh-
ter? Dirt

O' the kennel! Dowry? Dust o' the 40
street! Nought more,
Nought less, nought else but — oh — ah —
assuredly

A Franceschini and my very wife!
Now take this charge as you will, for false
or true, —

This charge, preferred before your very
selves

Who judge me now, — I pray you, ad-
judge again,

Classing it with the cheats or with the lies,
By which category I suffer most!

But of their reckoning, theirs who dealt
with me

In either fashion, — I reserve my word,
Justify that in its place; I am now to 50
say,

Whichever point o' the charge might
poison most,

Pompilia's duty was no doubtful one.
You put the protestation in her mouth

"Henceforward and forevermore, avault
"Ye fiends, who drop disguise and glare
revealed

"In your own shape, no longer father
mine

"Nor mother mine! Too nakedly you
hate

"Me whom you locked as if you loved
once, — me

"Whom, whether true or false, your tale
now damns,

"Divulged thus to my public infamy, 60
"Private perdition, absolute overthrow.

"For, hate my husband to your hearts'
content,

"I, spoil and prey of you from first to last,
"I, who have done you the blind service,
lured

"The lion to your pitfall, — I, thus left
"To answer for my ignorant bleating
there,

"I should have been remembered and
withdrawn

"From the first o' the natural fury, not
flung loose

"A proverb and a by-word men will
mouth

"At the cross-way, in the corner, up and 70
down

"Rome and Arezzo, — there, full in my
face,

"If my lord, missing them and finding
me,

"Content himself with casting his reproach
"To drop i' the street where such impostors
die.

"Ah, but — that husband, what the won-
der were! —

"If, far from casting thus away the rag

"Smeared with the plague his hand had
chanced upon,
"Sewn to his pillow by Locusta's¹ wile, —
"Far from abolishing, root, stem and
branch,
"The misgrowth of infectious mistletoe
"Foisted into his stock for honest graft, —
"If he repudiate not, renounce nowise,
"But, guarding, guiding me, maintain my
cause
"By making it his own, (what other way?)
" — To keep my name for me, he call it
his,
"Claim it of who would take it by their
lie, —
"To save my wealth for me — or babe of
mine
"Their lie was framed to beggar at the
birth —
"He bid them loose grasp, give our gold
again:
"If he become no partner with the pair
"Even in a game which, played adroitly,
gives
"It's winner life's great wonderful new
chance, —
"Of marrying, to-wit, a second time, —
"Ah, if he did thus, what a friend were he!
"Anger he might show, — who can stamp
out flame
"Yet spread no black o' the brand? —
yet, rough albeit
"In the act, as whose bare feet feel em-
bers scorch,
"What grace were his, what gratitude
were mine!"
Such protestation should have been my
wife's.
Looking for this, do I exact too much?
Why, here's the, — word for word, so
much, no more, —
Avowal she made, her pure spontaneous
speech
To my brother the Abate at first blush,
Ere the good impulse had begun to fade:
So did she make confession for the pair,
So pour forth praises in her own behalf.
"Ay, the false letter," interpose my lords —
"The simulated writing, — 'twas a trick:
"You traced the signs, she merely marked
the same,
"The product was not hers but yours."
Alack,
I want no more impulsion to tell truth
From the other trick, the torture inside
there!
I confess all — let it be understood —
And deny nothing! If I baffle you so,
Can so fence, in the plenitude of right,
That my poor lathen dagger puts aside

¹ *Locusta*: the name of a notorious female
poisoner at Rome in the first century; hence
typical of any poisoner.

Each pass o' the Bilboa, beats you all the
same, —
What matters inefficiency of blade?
Mine and not hers the letter, — conceded,
lords!
Impute to me that practice! — take as
proved
I taught my wife her duty, made her see
What it behoved her see and say and do,
Feel in her heart and with her tongue
declare,
And, whether sluggish or recalcitrant,
Forced her to take the right step, I my-
self
Was marching in marital rectitude!
Why who finds fault here, say the tale be
true?
Would not my lords commend the priest
whose zeal
Seized on the sick, morose or moribund,
By the palsy-smitten finger, made it cross
His brow correctly at the critical time?
— Or answered for the inarticulate babe
At baptism, in its stead declared the faith,
And saved what else would perish unpro-
fessed?
True, the incapable hand may rally yet,
Renounce the sign with renovated 60
strength, —
The babe may grow up man and Molin-
ist, —
And so Pompilia, set in the good path
And left to go alone there, soon might see
That too frank-forward, all too simple-
straight
Her step was, and decline to tread the
rough,
When here lay, tempting foot, the mead-
owside,
And there the coppice rang with singing-
birds!
Soon she discovered she was young and
fair,
That many in Arezzo knew as much.
Yes, this next cup of bitterness, my lords, 70
Had to begin go filling, drop by drop,
Its measure up of full disgust for me,
Filtered into by every noisome drain —
Society's sink toward which all moisture
runs.
Would not you prophesy — "She on
whose brow is stamped
"The note of the imputation that we
know, —
"Rightly or wrongly mothered with a
whore, —
"Such an one, to disprove the frightful
charge,
"What will she but exaggerate chastity,
"Err in excess of wifehood, as it were, 80
"Renounce even levities permitted youth
"Though not youth struck to age by a
thunderbolt?

"Cry 'wolf' i' the sheepfold, where's the sheep dares bleat,
 "Knowing the shepherd listens for a growl?"

So you expect. How did the devil decree?
 Why, my lords, just the contrary of course!
 It was in the house from the window, at the church

From the hassock, — where the theatre lent its lodge,

Or staging for the public show left space,
 That still Pompilia needs must find herself
 Launching her looks forth, letting looks reply

10 As arrows to a challenge; on all sides
 Ever new contribution to her lap,
 Till one day, what is it knocks at my clenched teeth

But the cup full, curse-collected all for me?
 And I must needs drink, drink this galling's praise,

That minion's prayer, the other fop's reproach,

And come at the dregs to — Caponsacchi! Sirs,

I, — chin-deep in a marsh of misery,
 Struggling to extricate my name and fame
 And fortune from the marsh would drown them all,

20 My face the sole unstrangled part of me, —
 I must have this new gad-fly in that face,
 Must free me from the attacking lover too!
 Men say I battled ungracefully enough —
 Was harsh, uncouth and ludicrous beyond
 The proper part o' the husband: have it so!
 Your lordships are considerate at least —
 You order me to speak in my defence
 Plainly, expect no quavering tuneful trills
 As when you bid a singer solace you, —

30 Nor look that I shall give it, for a grace,
Stans pede in uno:¹ — you remember well
 In the one case, 'tis a plainsong too severe,
 This story of my wrongs, — and that I ache

And need a chair, in the other. Ask you me

Why, when I felt this trouble flap my face,
 Already pricked with every shame could perch, —

When, with her parents, my wife plagued me too —

Why I enforced not exhortation mild
 To leave whore's-tricks and let my brows alone,

40 With mulct of comfits, promise of perfume?

"Far from that! No, you took the opposite course,

"Breathed threatnings, rage and slaughter!" What you will!

¹ *Stans pede in uno* — "standing on one foot," a metaphor descriptive of anything done easily or off-hand; from Horace, *Sat.* I. 4. 10.

And the end has come, the doom is verily here,

Unhindered by the threatening. See fate's flare

Full on each face of the dead guilty three!
 Look at them well, and now, lords, look at this!

Tell me: if on that day when I found first
 That Caponsacchi thought the nearest way
 To his church was some half-mile round by my door,

And that he so admired, shall I suppose, 5
 The manner of the swallows' come-and-go
 Between the props o' the window overhead, —

That window happening to be my wife's, —
 As to stand gazing by the hour on high,
 Of May-eves, while she sat and let him smile, —

If I, — instead of threatening, talking big,
 Showing hair-powder, a prodigious pinch,
 For poison in a bottle, — making believe
 At desperate doings with a bauble-sword,
 And other bugaboo-and-baby-work, — 6

Had, with the vulgarest household implement,

Calmly and quietly cut off, clean thro' bone

But one joint of one finger of my wife,
 Saying "For listening to the serenade,
 "Here's your ring-finger shorter a full third:

"Be certain I will slice away next joint,
 "Next time that anybody underneath
 "Seems somehow to be sauntering as he hoped

"A flower would eddy out of your hand to his

"While you please fidget with the branch 7
 above

"O' the rose-tree in the terrace!" — had I done so,

Why, there had followed a quick sharp scream, some pain,

Much calling for plaister, damage to the dress,

A somewhat sulky countenance next day,
 Perhaps reproaches, — but reflections too!
 I don't hear much of harm that Malchus did

After the incident of the ear, my lords!
 Saint Peter took the efficacious way;
 Malchus was sore but silenced for his life:
 He did not hang himself i' the Potter's 8
 Field

Like Judas, who was trusted with the bag
 And treated to sops after he proved a thief.
 So, by this time, my true and obedient wife

Might have been telling beads with a gloved hand;

Awkward a little at pricking hearts and darts

On sampler possibly, but well otherwise:
Not where Rome shudders now to see her
lie.

I give that for the course a wise man takes;
I took the other however, tried the fool's,
The lighter remedy, brandished rapier
dread

With cork-ball at the tip, boxed Malchus'
ear

Instead of severing the cartilage,
Called her a terrible nickname, and the
like,

And there an end: and what was the end
of that?

What was the good effect o' the gentle
course?

Why, one night I went drowsily to bed,
Dropped asleep suddenly, not suddenly
woke,

But did wake with rough rousing and loud
cry,

To find noon in my face, a crowd in my
room,

Fumes in my brain, fire in my throat, my
wife

Gone God knows whither, — rifled ves-
ture-chest,

And ransacked money-coffer. "What
does it mean?"

The servants had been drugged too, stared
and yawned

"It must be that our lady has eloped!"

— "Whither and with whom?" — "With
whom but the Canon's self?

"One recognizes Caponsacchi there!" —
(By this time the admiring neighbourhood
joined chorus round me while I rubbed my
eyes)

"'Tis months since their intelligence
began, —

"A comedy the town was privy to, —

"He wrote and she wrote, she spoke, he
replied,

"And going in and out your house last
night

"Was easy work for one . . . to be plain
with you . . .

"Accustomed to do both, at dusk and
dawn

"When you were absent, — at the villa,
you know,

"Where husbandry required the master-
mind.

"Did not you know? Why, we all knew,
you see!"

And presently, bit by bit, the full and true
Particulars of the tale were volunteered

With all the breathless zeal of friendship —
"Thus

"Matters were managed: at the seventh
hour of night" . . .

— "Later, at daybreak" . . . "Capon-
sacchi came" . . .

— "While you and all your household
slept like death,

"Drugged as your supper was with drowsy
stuff" . . .

— "And your own cousin Guillichini too — 40

"Either or both entered your dwelling-
place,

"Plundered it at their pleasure, made prize
of all,

"Including your wife . . ." — "Oh, your
wife led the way,

"Out of doors, on to the gate . . ." —
"But gates are shut,

"In a decent town, to darkness and such
deeds:

"They climbed the wall — your lady must
be lithe —

"At the gap, the broken bit . . ." —
— "Torrione, true!

"To escape the questioning guard at the
proper gate,

"Clemente, where at the inn, hard by,
'the Horse,'

"Just outside, a calash in readiness 50

"Took the two principals, all alone at
last,

"To gate San Spirito, which o'erlooks the
road,

"Leads to Perugia, Rome and liberty."
Bit by bit thus made-up mosaic-wise,

Flat lay my fortune, — tessellated floor,
Imperishable tracery devils should foot

And frolic it on, around my broken gods,
Over my desecrated hearth.

So much
For the terrible effect of threatening, Sirs!

Well, this way I was shaken wide awake, 60

Doctored and drenched, somewhat un-
poisoned so.

Then, set on horseback, and bid seek the
lost,

I started alone, head of me, heart of me
Fire, and each limb as languid . . . ah,
sweet lords,

Bethink you! — poison-torture, try per-
suade

The next refractory Molinist with that! . . .
Floundered thro' day and night, another
day

And yet another night, and so at last,
As Lucifer kept falling to find hell,

Tumbled into the court-yard of an inn 70

At the end, and fell on whom I thought to
find,

Even Caponsacchi, — what part once was
priest,

Cast to the winds now with the cassock-
rags.

In cape and sword a cavalier confessed,
There stood he chiding dilatory grooms,
Chafing that only horseflesh and no
team

Of eagles would supply the last relay,

Whirl him along the league, the one post
more

Between the couple and Rome and liberty.
'Twas dawn, the couple were rested in a
sort,

And though the lady, tired, — the tender
sex, —

Still lingered in her chamber, — to adjust
The limp hair, look for any blush astray, —
She would descend in a twinkling, —

"Have you out

"The horses therefore!"

So did I find my wife.

Is the case complete? Do your eyes here
see with mine?

10 Even the parties dared deny no one
Point out of all these points.

What follows next?

"Why, that then was the time," you inter-
pose,

"Or then or never, while the fact was
fresh,

"To take the natural vengeance: there
and thus

"They and you, — somebody had stuck a
sword

"Beside you while he pushed you on your
horse, —

"'Twas requisite to slay the couple,
Count!"

Just so my friends say. "Kill!" they
cry in a breath,

Who presently, when matters grow to a
head

20 And I do kill the offending ones indeed, —
When crime of theirs, only surmised before,
Is patent, proved indisputably now, —

When remedy for wrong, untried at the
time,

Which law professes shall not fail a
friend,

Is thrice tried now, found threefold worse
than null, —

When what might turn to transient shade,
who knows?

Solidifies into a blot which breaks
Hell's black off in pale flakes for fear of

mine, —

Then, when I claim and take revenge —
"So rash?"

30 They cry — "so little reverence for the
law?"

Listen, my masters, and distinguish here!
At first, I called in law to act and help:

Seeing I did so, "Why, 'tis clear," they
cry,

"You shrank from gallant readiness and
risk,

"Were coward: the thing's inexplicable
else."

Sweet my lords, let the thing be! I fall
flat,

Play the reed, not the oak, to breath of
man.

Only inform my ignorance! Say I stand
Convicted of the having been afraid,
Proved a poltroon, no lion but a lamb, —
Does that deprive me of my right of lamb
And give my fleece and flesh to the first
wolf?

Are eunuchs, women, children, shieldless
quite

Against attack their own timidity tempts?
Cowardice were misfortune and no crime!

— Take it that way, since I am fallen so
low

I scarce dare brush the fly that blows my
face,

And thank the man who simply spits not
there, —

Unless the Court be generous, compre-
hend

How one brought up at the very feet of law
As I, awaits the grave Gamaliel's nod

Ere he clench fist at outrage, — much less,
stab!

— How, ready enough to rise at the right
time,

I still could recognise no time mature
Unsanctioned by a move o' the judgment-
seat,

So, mute in misery, eyed my masters here
Motionless till the authoritative word

Pronounced amercement. There's the
riddle solved:

This is just why I slew nor her nor him,
But called in law, law's delegate in the
place,

And bade arrest the guilty couple, Sirs!

We had some trouble to do so — you have
heard

They braved me, — he with arrogance
and scorn,

She, with a volubility of curse,
A conversancy in the skill of tooth

And claw to make suspicion seem absurd,
Nay, an alacrity to put to proof

At my own throat my own sword, teach
me so

To try conclusions better the next time, —
Which did the proper service with the mob.

They never tried to put on mask at all:
Two avowed lovers forcibly torn apart,

Upbraided the tyrant as in a playhouse scene,
Ay, and with proper clapping and applause

From the audience that enjoys the bold and
free.

I kept still, said to myself, "There's law!"
Anon

We searched the chamber where they
passed the night,

Found what confirmed the worst was
feared before,

However needless confirmation now —
The witches' circle intact, charms undis-
turbed

That raised the spirit and succubus, —
 letters, to-wit,
 Love-laden, each the bag o' the bee that
 bore
 Honey from lily and rose to Cupid's
 hive, —
 Now, poetry in some rank blossom-burst,
 Now, prose, — "Come here, go there,
 wait such a while,
 "He's at the villa, now he's back again:
 "We are saved, we are lost, we are lovers
 all the same!"
 All in order, all complete, — even to a clue
 To the drowsiness that happed so oppor-
 tune —
 No mystery, when I read "Of all things,
 find
 "What wine Sir Jealousy decides to
 drink —
 "Red wine? Because a sleeping-potion,
 dust
 "Dropped into white, discolours wine and
 shows."
 — "Oh, but we did not write a single word!
 "Somebody forged the letters in our
 name!" —
 Both in a breath protested presently.
 Aha, Sacchetti¹ again! — "Dame," —
 quoth the Duke,
 "What meaneth this epistle, counsel me,
 "I pick from out thy placket and peruse,
 "Wherein my page averreth thou art
 white
 "And warm and wonderful 'twixt pap and
 pap?"
 "Sir," laughed the Lady, "'tis a counter-
 feit!"
 "Thy page did never stroke but Dian's
 breast,
 "The pretty hound I nurture for thy sake:
 "To lie were losel, — by my fay, no
 more!"
 And no more say I too, and spare the
 Court.

Ah, the Court! yes, I come to the Court's
 self;
 Such the case, so complete in fact and
 proof,
 I laid at the feet of law, — there sat my
 lords,
 Here sit they now, so may they ever sit
 In easier attitude than suits my haunch!
 In this same chamber did I bare my sores
 O' the soul and not the body, — shun no
 shame,
 Shrink from no probing of the ulcerous
 part,
 Since confident in Nature, — which is
 God, —

That she who, for wise ends, concocts a
 plague,
 Curbs, at the right time, the plague's viru-
 lence too:
 Law renovates even Lazarus, — cures me!
 Cæsar thou seekest? To Cæsar thou
 shalt go!
 Cæsar's at Rome: to Rome accordingly! 40

The case was soon decided: both weights,
 cast
 I' the balance, vibrate, neither kicks the
 beam,
 Here away, there away, this now and now
 that.
 To every one o' my grievances law gave
 Redress, could purblind eye but see the
 point.
 The wife stood a convicted runagate
 From house and husband, — driven to
 such a course
 By what she somehow took for cruelty,
 Oppression and imperilment of life —
 Not that such things were, but that so they 50
 seemed:
 Therefore, the end conceded lawful, (since
 To save life there's no risk should stay our
 leap)
 It follows that all means to the lawful end
 Are lawful likewise, — poison, theft and
 flight.
 As for the priest's part, did he meddle or
 make,
 Enough that he too thought life jeopard-
 ised;
 Concede him then the colour charity
 Casts on a doubtful course, — if blackish
 white
 Or whitish black, will charity hesitate?
 What did he else but act the precept out, 60
 Leave, like a provident shepherd, his safe
 flock
 To follow the single lamb and strayaway?
 Best hope so and think so, — that the
 ticklish time
 I' the carriage, the tempting privacy, the
 last
 Somewhat ambiguous accident at the inn,
 — All may bear explanation: may?
 then, must!
 The letters, — do they so incriminate?
 But what if the whole prove a prank o' the
 pen,
 Flight of the fancy, none of theirs at all,
 Bred of the vapours of my brain belike, 70
 Or at worst mere exercise of scholar's-wit
 In the courtly Caponsacchi: verse, con-
 vict?
 Did not Catullus write less seemly once?
 Yet *doctus* and unblemished he abides.
 Wherefore so ready to infer the worst?
 Still, I did righteously in bringing doubts
 For the law to solve, — take the solution
 now!

¹ Sacchetti: Franco Sacchetti, who lived
 about 1335-1410, author of stories in the manner
 of Boccaccio.

"Seeing that the said associates, wife and priest,

"Bear themselves not without some touch of blame

" — Else why the pother, scandal and outcry

"Which trouble our peace and require chaatiseement?

"We, for complicity in Pompilia's flight

"And deviation, and carnal intercourse

"With the same, do set aside and relegate

"The Canon Caponsacchi for three years

"At Civita in the neighbourhood of Rome:

10 "And we consign Pompilia to the care

"Of a certain Sisterhood of penitents

"I' the city's self, expert to deal with such."

Word for word, there's your judgment!

Read it, lords,

Re-utter your deliberate penalty

For the crime yourselves establish! Your award —

Who chop a man's right-hand off at the wrist

For tracing with forefinger words in wine

O' the table of a drinking-booth that bear

Interpretation as they mocked the Church!

20 — Who brand a woman black between the breasts

For sinning by connection with a Jew:

While for the Jew's self — pudency be dumb!

You mete out punishment such and such, yet so

Punish the adultery of wife and priest!

Take note of that, before the Molinists do,

And read me right the riddle, since right must be!

While I stood rapt away with wonderment,

Voices broke in upon my mood and muse.

"Do you sleep?" began the friends at either ear,

30 "The case is settled, — you willed it should be so —

"None of our counsel, always recollect!

"With law's award, budge! Back into your place!

"Your betters shall arrange the rest for you.

"We'll enter a new action, claim divorce:

"Your marriage was a cheat themselves allow:

"You erred i' the person, — might have married thus

"Your sister or your daughter unaware.

"We'll gain you, that way, liberty at least,

"Sure of so much by law's own showing.

Up

40 "And off with you and your unluckiness —

"Leave us to bury the blunder, sweep things smooth!"

I was in humble frame of mind, be sure!

I bowed, betook me to my place again.

Station by station I retraced the road,

Touched at this hostel, passed this post-house by,

Where, fresh-remembered yet, the fugitives

Had risen to the heroic stature: still —

"That was the bench they sat on, — there's the board

"They took the meal at, — yonder garden ground

"They leaned across the gate of," — ever a word

O' the Helen and the Paris, with "Ha!

you're he,

"The . . . much-commiserated husband?" Step

By step, across the pelting, did I reach

Arezzo, underwent the archway's grin,

Traversed the length of sarcasm in the street,

Found myself in my horrible house once more,

And after a colloquy . . . no word assists!

With the mother and the brothers, stifened me

Straight out from head to foot as dead man does,

And, thus prepared for life as he for hell,

Marched to the public Square and met the world.

Apologize for the pincers, palliate screws?

Ply me with such toy-trifles, I entreat!

Trust who has tried both sulphur and sops-in-wine!

I played the man as I best might, bade friends

Put non-essentials by and face the fact.

"What need to hang myself as you advise?

"The paramour is banished, — the ocean's width,

Or the suburb's length, — to Ultima Thule, say,

"Or Proxima Civitas, what's the odds of name

"And place? He's banished, and the fact's the thing.

"Why should law banish innocence an inch?

"Here's guilt then, what else do I care to know?

"The adulteress lies imprisoned, — whether in a well

"With bricks above and a snake for company,

"Or tied by a garter to a bed-post, — much

"I mind what's little, — least's enough and to spare!

"The little fillip on the coward's cheek

"Serves as though crab-tree cudgel broke his pate.

- "Law has pronounced there's punishment,
less or more:
"And I take note o' the fact and use it
thus —
"For the first flaw in the original bond,
"I claim release. My contract was to
wed
"The daughter of Pietro and Violante.
Both
"Protest they never had a child at all.
"Then I have never made a contract:
good!
"Cancel me quick the thing pretended one.
"I shall be free. What matter if hurried
over
o "The harbour-boom by a great favouring
tide,
"Or the last of a spent ripple that lifts and
leaves?
"The Abate is about it. Laugh who wins!
"You shall not laugh me out of faith in
law!
"I listen, through all your noise, to
Rome!"
- Rome spoke.
In three months letters thence admonished
me,
"Your plan for the divorce is all mistake.
"It would hold, now, had you, taking
thought to wed
"Rachel of the blue eye and golden hair,
"Found swarth-skinned Leah cumber
couch next day:
o "But Rachel, blue-eyed golden-haired
aright,
"Proving to be only Laban's child, not
Lot's,
"Remains yours all the same for ever
more.
"No whit to the purpose is your plea: you
err
"I' the person and the quality — nowise
"In the individual, — that's the case in
point!
"You go to the ground, — are met by a
cross-suit
"For separation, of the Rachel here,
"From bed and board, — she is the in-
jured one,
"You did the wrong and have to answer it.
o "As for the circumstance of imprisonment
"And colour it lends to this your new
attack,
"Never fear, that point is considered too!
"The durance is already at an end;
"The convent-quiet preyed upon her
health,
"She is transferred now to her parents'
house
" — No-parents, when that cheats and
plunders you,
"But parentage again confessed in full,
"When such confession pricks and plagues
you more —
- "As now — for, this their house is not the
house
"In Via Vittoria wherein neighbours' 4c
watch
"Might incommode the freedom of your
wife,
"But a certain villa smothered up in vines
"At the town's edge by the gate i' the
Pauline Way,
"Out of eye-reach, out of ear-shot, little
and lone,
"Whither a friend, — at Civita, we hope,
"A good half-dozen-hours' ride off, —
might, some eve,
"Betake himself, and whence ride back,
some morn,
"Nobody the wiser: but be that as it may,
"Do not afflict your brains with trifles
now.
"You have still three suits to manage, all 50
and each
"Ruinous truly should the event play
false.
"It is indeed the likelier so to do,
"That brother Paul, your single prop and
stay,
"After a vain attempt to bring the Pope
"To set aside procedures, sit himself
"And summarily use prerogative,
"Afford us the infallible finger's tact
"To disentwine your tangle of affairs,
"Paul, — finding it moreover past his
strength
"To stem the irruption, bear Rome's 60
ridicule
"Of . . . since friends must speak . . .
to be round with you . . .
"Of the old outwitted husband, wronged
and wroth,
"Pitted against a brace of juveniles —
"A brisk priest who is versed in Ovid's art
"More than his Summa, and a gamesome
wife
"Able to act Corinna without book,
"Beside the waggish parents who played
dupes
"To dupe the duper — (and truly divers
scenes
"Of the Arezzo palace, tickle rib
"And tease eye till the tears come, so we 70
laugh;
"Nor wants the shock at the inn its comic
force,
"And then the letters and poetry — *merum
sal!*)
" — Paul, finally, in such a state of things,
"After a brief temptation to go jump
"And join the fishes in the Tiber, drowns
"Sorrow another and a wiser way:
"House and goods, he has sold all off, is
gone,
"Leaves Rome, — whether for France or
Spain, who knows?
"Or Britain almost divided from our orb.

"You have lost him anyhow."

Now, — I see my lords
Shift in their seat, — would I could do the
same!

They probably please expect my bile was
moved

To purpose, nor much blame me: now,
they judge,

The fiery titillation urged my flesh
Break through the bonds. By your par-
don, no, sweet Sirs!

I got such missives in the public place;
When I sought home, — with such news,
mounted stair

And sat at last in the sombre gallery,
to ("Twas Autumn, the old mother in bed
betimes,

Having to bear that cold, the finer frame
Of her daughter-in-law had found intoler-
able —

The brother, walking misery away
O' the mountain-side with dog and gun
belike)

As I supped, ate the coarse bread, drank
the wine

Weak once, now acrid with the toad's-
head-squeeze,

My wife's bestowment, — I broke silence
thus:

"Let me, a man, manfully meet the fact,
"Confront the worst o' the truth, end, and
have peace!

20 "I am irremediably beaten here, —

"The gross illiterate vulgar couple, —
bah!

"Why, they have measured forces,
mastered mine,

"Made me their spoil and prey from first
to last.

"They have got my name, — 'tis nailed
now fast to theirs,

"The child or changeling is anyway my
wife;

"Point by point as they plan they execute,
"They gain all, and I lose all — even to the
lure

"That led to loss, — they have the wealth
again

"They hazarded awhile to hook me with,
30 "Have caught the fish and find the bait
entire:

"They even have their child or changeling
back

"To trade with, turn to account a second
time.

"The brother presumably might tell a tale
"Or give a warning, — he, too, flies the
field,

"And with him vanish help and hope of
help.

"They have caught me in the cavern where
I fell,

"Covered my loudest cry for human
aid

"With this enormous paving-stone of
shame.

"Well, are we demigods or merely clay?

"Is success still attendant on desert? 40

"Is this, we live on, heaven and the final
state,

"Or earth which means probation to the
end?

"Why claim escape from man's pre-
destined lot

"Of being beaten and baffled? — God's
decree,

"In which I, bowing bruised head, ac-
quiesce.

"One of us Franceschini fell long since
"I the Holy Land, betrayed, tradition
runs,

"To Paynims by the feigning of a girl
"He rushed to free from ravisher, and
found

"Lay safe enough with friends in am- 50
buscade

"Who flayed him while she clapped her
hands and laughed:

"Let me end, falling by a like device.
"It will not be so hard. I am the last

"O' my line which will not suffer any more.
"I have attained to my full fifty years,

"(About the average of us all, 'tis said,
"Though it seems longer to the unlucky
man)

" — Lived through my share of life; let
all end here,

"Me and the house and grief and shame
at once.

"Friends my informants, — I can bear 60
your blow!"

And I believe 'twas in no unmeet match
For the stoic's mood, with something like
a smile,

That, when morose December roused me
next,

I took into my hand, broke seal to read
The new epistle from Rome. "All to no
use!

"Whate'er the turn next injury take,"
smiled I,

"Here's one has chosen his part and knows
his cue.

"I am done with, dead now; strike away,
good friends!

"Are the three suits decided in a trice?
"Against me, — there's no question! 70
How does it go?

"Is the parentage of my wife demon-
strated

"Infamous to her wish? Parades she now
"Loosed of the cincture that so irked the
loin?

"Is the last penny extracted from my
purse

"To mulct me for demanding the first
pound

"Was promised in return for value paid?

- "Has the priest, with nobody to court be-
side,
"Courtèd the Muse in exile, hitched my
hap
"Into a rattling ballad-rhyme which,
bawled
"At tavern-doors, wakes rapture every-
where,
"And helps cheap wine down throat this
Christmas time,
"Beating the bagpipes? Any or all of
these!
"As well, good friends, you cursed my
palace here
"To its old cold stone face, — struck your
cap for crest
"Over the shield that's extant in the
Square, —
"Or spat on the statue's cheek, the im-
patient world
"Sees cumber tomb-top in our family
church:
"Let him creep under covert as I shall do,
"Half below-ground already indeed.
Good-bye!
"My brothers are priests, and childless so;
that's well —
"And, thank God most for this, no child
leave I —
"None after me to bear till his heart
break
"The being a Franceschini and my son!"
- "Nay," said the letter, "but you have just
that!
"A babe, your veritable son and heir —
"Lawful, — 'tis only eight montins since
your wife
"Left you, — so, son and heir, your babe
was born
"Last Wednesday in the villa, — you see
the cause
"For quitting Convent without beat of
drum,
"Stealing a hurried march to this retreat
"That's not so savage as the Sisterhood
"To slips and stumbles: Pietro's heart
is soft,
"Violante leans to pity's side, — the pair
"Ushered you into life a bouncing boy:
"And he's already hidden away and safe
30 "From any claim on him you mean to
make —
"They need him for themselves, — don't
fear, they know
"The use o' the bantling, — the nerve thus
laid bare
"To nip at, new and nice, with finger-
nail!"
- Then I rose up like fire, and fire-like
roared.
What, all is only beginning not ending
now?
- The worm which wormed its way from
skin through flesh
To the bone and there lay biting, did its
best, —
What, it goes on to scrape at the bone's
self,
Will wind to inmost marrow and madden
me?
There's to be yet my representative, 44
Another of the name shall keep displayed
The flag with the ordure on it, brandish
still
The broken sword has served to stir a
jakes?
Who will he be, how will you call the man?
A Franceschini, — when who cut my
purse,
Filched my name, hemmed me round,
hustled me hard
As rogues at a fair some fool they strip i'
the midst,
When these count gains, vaunt pillage
presently: —
But a Caponsacchi, oh, be very sure!
When what demands its tribute of applause 50
Is the cunning and impudence o' the pair
of cheats,
The lies and lust o' the mother, and the
brave
Bold carriage of the priest, worthily
crowned
By a witness to his feat i' the following
age, —
And how this three-fold cord could hook
and fetch
And land leviathan that king of pride!
Or say, by some mad miracle of chance,
Is he indeed my flesh and blood, this babe?
Was it because fate forged a link at last
Betwixt my wife and me, and both alike 60
Found we had henceforth some one thing
to love,
Was it when she could damn my soul in-
deed
She unlatched door, let all the devils o' the
dark
Dance in on me to cover her escape?
Why then, the surplusage of disgrace, the
spilth
Over and above the measure of infamy,
Failing to take effect on my coarse flesh
Seasoned with scorn now, saturate with
shame, —
Is saved to instil on and corrode the brow,
The baby-softness of my first-born child — 70
The child I had died to see though in a
dream,
The child I was bid strike out for, beat the
wave
And baffle the tide of troubles where I
swam,
So I might touch shore, lay down life at
last
At the feet so dim and distant and divine

Of the apparition, as 'twere Mary's Babe
Had held, through night and storm, the
torch aloft, —

Born now in very deed to bear this brand
On forehead and curse me who could not
save!

Rather be the town-talk true, square's jest,
street's jeer

True, my own inmost heart's confession
true,

And he the priest's bastard and none of
mine!

Ay, there was cause for flight, swift flight
and sure!

The husband gets unruly, breaks all
bounds

10 When he encounters some familiar face,
Fashion of feature, brow and eyes and
lips

Where he least looked to find them, —
time to fly!

This bastard then, a nest for him is made,
As the manner is of vermin, in my flesh:

Shall I let the filthy pest buzz, flap and
sting,

Busy at my vitals and, nor hand nor foot
Lift, but let be, lie still and not resigned?

No, I appeal to God, — what says Him-
self,

How lessons Nature when I look to learn?

20 Why, that I am alive, am still a man
With brain and heart and tongue and
right-hand too —

Nay, even with friends, in such a cause as
this,

To right me if I fail to take my right.

No more of law; a voice beyond the law
Enters my heart, *Quis est pro Domino?*¹

Myself, in my own Vittiano, told the tale
To my own serving-people summoned
there:

Told the first half of it, scarce heard to
end

By judges who got done with judgment
quick

30 And clamoured to go execute her 'hest —
Who cried "Not one of us that dig your
soil

"And dress your vineyard, prune your
olive-trees,

"But would have brained the man de-
bauched our wife,

"And staked the wife whose lust allured
the man,

"And paunched the Duke, had it been
possible,

"Who ruled the land yet barred us such
revenge!"

I fixed on the first whose eyes caught mine,
some four

Resolute youngsters with the heart still
fresh,

Filled my purse with the residue o' the
coin

Uncaught-up by my wife whom haste
made blind,

Donned the first rough and rural garb I
found,

Took whatsoever weapon came to hand,
And out we flung and on we ran or reeled

Romeward. I have no memory of our
way,

Only that, when at intervals the cloud
Of horror about me opened to let in life,

I listened to some song in the ear, some
snatch

Of a legend, relic of religion, stray
Fragment of record very strong and old

Of the first conscience, the anterior right, 5
The God's-gift to mankind, impulse to
quench

The antagonistic spark of hell and tread
Satan and all his malice into dust,

Declare to the world the one law, right is
right.

Then the cloud re-encompassed me, and
so

I found myself, as on the wings of winds,
Arrived: I was at Rome on Christmas

Eve.

Festive bells — everywhere the Feast o'
the Babe,

Joy upon earth, peace and good will to
men!

I am baptized. I started and let drop 6
The dagger. "Where is it, His promised
peace?"

Nine days o' the Birth-Feast did I pause
and pray

To enter into no temptation more.
I bore the hateful house, my brother's

once,
Deserted, — let the ghost of social joy

Mock and make mouths at me from empty
room

And idle door that missed the master's
step, —

Bore the frank wonder of incredulous eyes,
As my own people watched without a word,

Waited, from where they huddled round 7
the hearth

Black like all else, that nod so slow to
come.

I stopped my ears even to the inner call
Of the dread duty, only heard the song

"Peace upon earth," saw nothing but the
face

O' the Holy Infant and the halo there
Able to cover yet another face

Behind it, Satan's which I else should
see.

But, day by day joy waned and withered
off:

¹ *Quis est pro Domino*: "Who is on the Lord's
side?"

The Babe's face, premature with peak and pine,
 Sank into wrinkled ruinous old age,
 Suffering and death, then mist-like disappeared,
 And showed only the Cross at end of all,
 Left nothing more to interpose 'twixt me
 And the dread duty: for the angels' song,
 "Peace upon earth," louder and louder pealed
 "O Lord, how long, how long be un-
 avenged?"
 On the ninth day, this grew too much for man.
 I started up — "Some end must be!"
 At once,
 Silence; then, scratching like a death-
 watch-tick,
 Slowly within my brain was syllabled,
 "One more concession, one decisive way
 "And but one, to determine thee the
 truth, —
 "This way, in fine, I whisper in thy ear:
 "Now doubt, anon decide, thereupon
 act!"
 "That is a way, thou whisperest in my
 ear!
 "I doubt, I will decide, then act," said
 I —
 Then beckoned my companions: "Time
 is come!"
 And so, all yet uncertain save the will
 To do right, and the daring aught save
 leave
 Right undone, I did find myself at last
 I' the dark before the villa with my
 friends,
 And made the experiment, the final test,
 Ultimate chance that ever was to be
 For the wretchedness inside. I knocked,
 pronounced
 The name, the predetermined touch for
 truth,
 "What welcome for the wanderer? Open
 straight —"
 To the friend, physician, friar upon his
 rounds,
 Traveller belated, beggar lame and blind?
 No, but — "to Caponsacchi!" And the
 door
 Opened.
 And then, — why, even then, I think,
 I' the minute that confirmed my worst of
 fears,
 Surely, — I pray God that I think
 aright! —
 Had but Pompilia's self, the tender thing
 Who once was good and pure, was once my
 lamb
 And lay in my bosom, had the well-known
 shape

Fronted me in the door-way, — stood
 there faint
 With the recent pang perhaps of giving
 birth
 To what might, though by miracle, seem 40
 my child, —
 Nay more, I will say, had even the aged
 fool
 Pietro, the dotard, in whom folly and age
 Wrought, more than enmity or malevo-
 lence,
 To practise and conspire against my
 peace, —
 Had either of these but opened, I had
 paused.
 But it was she the hag, she that brought
 hell
 For a dowry with her to her husband's
 house,
 She the mock-mother, she that made the
 match
 And married me to perdition, spring and
 source
 O' the fire inside me that boiled up from 50
 heart
 To brain and hailed the Fury gave it
 birth, —
 Violante Comparini, she it was,
 With the old grin amid the wrinkles yet,
 Opened: as if in turning from the Cross,
 With trust to keep the sight and save my
 soul,
 I had stumbled, first thing, on the serpent's
 head
 Coiled with a leer at foot of it.
 There was the end!
 Then was I rapt away by the impulse, one
 Immeasurable everlasting wave of a need
 To abolish that detested life. 'Twas 60
 done:
 You know the rest and how the folds o'
 the thing,
 Twisting for help, involved the other two
 More or less serpent-like: how I was
 mad,
 Blind, stamped on all, the earth-worms
 with the asp,
 And ended so.
 You came on me that night,
 Your officers of justice, — caught the
 crime
 In the first natural frenzy of remorse?
 Twenty miles off, sound sleeping as a child
 On a cloak i' the straw which promised
 shelter first,
 With the bloody arms beside me, — was it 70
 not so?
 Wherefore not? Why, how else should I
 be found?
 I was my own self, had my sense again,
 My soul safe from the serpents. I could
 sleep:
 Indeed and, dear my lords, I shall sleep
 now,

Spite of my shoulder, in five minutes' space,

When you dismiss me, having truth enough!

It is but a few days are passed, I find,
Since this adventure. Do you tell me, four?

Then the dead are scarce quiet where they lie,

Old Pietro, old Violante, side by side

At the church Lorenzo, — oh, they know it well!

So do I. But my wife is still alive,

Has breath enough to tell her story yet,

10 Her way, which is not mine, no doubt at all.

And Caponsacchi, you have summoned him, —

Was he so far to send for? Not at hand?

I thought some few o' the stabs were in his heart,

Or had not been so lavish: less had served.

Well, he too tells his story, — florid prose
As smooth as mine is rough. You see, my lords,

There will be a lying intoxicating smoke
Born of the blood, — confusion probably, —

For lies breed lies — but all that rests with you!

20 The trial is no concern of mine; with me
The main of the care is over: I at least

Recognise who took that huge burthen off,

Let me begin to live again. I did

God's bidding and man's duty, so, breathe free;

Look you to the rest! I heard Himself prescribe,

That great Physician, and dared lance the core

Of the bad ulcer; and the rage abates,
I am myself and whole now: I prove cured

By the eyes that see, the ears that hear again,

30 The limbs that have relearned their youthful play,

The healthy taste of food and feel of clothes

And taking to our common life once more,
All that now urges my defence from death.

The willingness to live, what means it else?
Before, — but let the very action speak!

Judge for yourselves, what life seemed worth to me

Who, not by proxy but in person, pitched
Head-foremost into danger as a fool

That never cares if he can swim or no —

40 So he but find the bottom, braves the brook.

No man omits precaution, quite neglects
Secresy, safety, schemes not how retreat,

Having schemed he might advance. Did I so scheme?

Why, with a warrant which 'tis ask and have,

With horse thereby made mine without a word,

I had gained the frontier and slept safe that night.

Then, my companions, — call them what you please,

Slave or stipendiary, — what need of one
To me whose right-hand did its owner's work?

Hire an assassin yet expose yourself?
As well buy glove and then thrust naked hand

I' the thorn-bush. No, the wise man stays at home,

Sends only agents out, with pay to earn:
At home, when they come back, — he straight discards

Or else disowns. Why use such tools at all

When a man's foes are of his house, like mine,

Sit at his board, sleep in his bed? Why noise,

When there's the *acquetta* and the silent way?

Clearly my life was valueless.

But now

Health is returned, and sanity of soul
Nowise indifferent to the body's harm.

I find the instinct bids me save my life;
My wits, too, rally round me; I pick up

And use the arms that strewed the ground before,

Unnoticed or spurned aside: I take my stand,

Make my defence. God shall not lose a life

May do Him further service, while I speak
And you hear, you my judges and last hope!

You are the law: 'tis to the law I look.
I began life by hanging to the law,

To the law it is I hang till life shall end.
My brother made appeal to the Pope, 'tis true,

To stay proceedings, judge my cause himself

Nor trouble law, — some fondness of conceit

That rectitude, sagacity sufficed
The investigator in a case like mine,

Dispensed with the machine of law. The Pope

Knew better, set aside my brother's plea
And put me back to law, — referred the cause

Ad iudices meos, — doubtlessly did well. 80
Here, then, I clutch my judges, — I claim law —

Cry, by the higher law thereof your law
O' the land is humbly representative, —

Cry, on what point is it, where either accuse,
 I fail to furnish you defence? I stand
 Acquitted, actually or virtually,
 By every intermediate kind of court
 That takes account of right or wrong in man,
 Each unit in the series that begins
 With God's throne, ends with the tribunal here.
 God breathes, not speaks, his verdicts, felt
 not heard,
 Passed on successively to each court I call
 Man's conscience, custom, manners, all
 that make
 More and more effort to promulgate, mark
 God's verdict in determinable words,
 Till last come human jurists — solidify
 Fluid result, — what's fixable lies forged,
 Statute, — the residue escapes in fume,
 Yet hangs aloft, a cloud, as palpable
 To the finer sense as word the legist welds.
 Justinian's Pandects only make precise
 What simply sparkled in men's eyes
 before,
 Twitched in their brow or quivered on
 their lip,
 Waited the speech they called but would
 not come.
 These courts then, whose decree your own
 confirms, —
 Take my whole life, not this last act alone,
 Look on it by the light reflected thence!
 What has Society to charge me with?
 Come, unreservedly, — favour none nor
 fear, —
 I am Guido Franceschini, am I not?
 You know the courses I was free to take?
 I took just that which let me serve the
 Church,
 I gave it all my labour in body and soul
 Till these broke down i' the service.
 "Specify?"
 Well, my last patron was a Cardinal.
 I left him unconvicted of a fault —
 Was even helped, by way of gratitude,
 Into the new life that I left him for,
 This very misery of the marriage, — he
 Made it, kind soul, so far as in him lay —
 Signed the deed where you yet may see his
 name.
 He is gone to his reward, — dead, being
 my friend
 Who could have helped here also, — that,
 of course!
 So far, there's my acquittal, I suppose.
 Then comes the marriage itself — no ques-
 tion, lords,
 Of the entire validity of that!
 In the extremity of distress, 'tis true,
 For after-reasons, furnished abundantly,
 I wished the thing invalid, went to you
 Only some months since, set you duly
 forth

My wrong and prayed your remedy, *that*
 a cheat
 Should not have force to cheat my whole
 life long.
 "Annul a marriage? 'Tis impossible! 54
 "Though ring about your neck be brass
 not gold,
 "Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all the
 same!"
 Well, let me have the benefit, just so far,
 O' the fact announced, — my wife then is
 my wife,
 I have allowance for a husband's right.
 I am charged with passing right's due
 bound, — such acts
 As I thought just, my wife called cruelty,
 Complained of in due form, — convoked
 no court
 Of common gossipry, but took her
 wrongs —
 And not once, but so long as patience 60
 served —
 To the town's top, jurisdiction's pride of
 place,
 To the Archbishop and the Governor.
 These heard her charge with my reply, and
 found
 That futile, this sufficient: they dismissed
 The hysteric querulous rebel, and con-
 firmed
 Authority in its wholesome exercise,
 They, with directest access to the facts.
 "— Ay, for it was their friendship favoured
 you,
 "Hereditary alliance against a breach
 "I' the social order: prejudice for the 70
 name
 "Of Franceschini!" — So I hear it said:
 But not here. You, lords, never will you
 say
 "Such is the nullity of grace and truth,
 "Such the corruption of the faith, such
 lapse
 "Of law, such warrant have the Molinists
 "For daring reprehend us as they do, —
 "That we pronounce it just a common
 case,
 "Two dignitaries, each in his degree
 "First, foremost, this the spiritual head,
 and that
 "The secular arm o' the body politic, 80
 "Should, for mere wrongs' love and
 injustice' sake,
 "Side with, aid and abet in cruelty
 "This broken beggarly noble, — bribed
 perhaps
 "By his watered wine and mouldy crust of
 bread —
 "Rather than that sweet tremulous flower-
 like wife
 "Who kissed their hands and curled about
 their feet
 "Looking the irresistible loveliness

"In tears that takes man captive, turns"
... enough!

Do you blast your predecessors? What
forbids

Posterity to trebly blast yourselves
Who set the example and instruct their
tongue?

You dreaded the crowd, succumbed to the
popular cry,

Or else, would nowise seem defer thereto
And yield to public clamour though i' the
right!

You ridded your eye of my unseemliness,
The noble whose misfortune wearied
you, —

10 Or, what's more probable, made common
cause

With the cleric section, punished in myself
Maladroit uncomplaisant laity,
Defective in behaviour to a priest

Who claimed the customary partnership
I' the house and the wife. Lords, any lie
will serve!

Look to it, — or allow me freed so far!

Then I proceed a step, come with clean
hands

Thus far, re-tell the tale told eight months
since.

The wife, you allow so far, I have not
wronged,

20 Has fled my roof, plundered me and de-
camped

In company with the priest her paramour:
And I gave chase, came up with, caught
the two

At the wayside inn where both had spent
the night,

Found them in flagrant fault, and found as
well,

By documents with name and plan and
date,

The fault was furtive then that's flagrant
now,

Their intercourse a long established crime.
I did not take the licence law's self gives
To slay both criminals o' the spot at the
time,

30 But held my hand, — preferred play
prodigy

Of patience which the world calls coward-
ice,

Rather than seem anticipate the law
And cast discredit on its organs, — you.
So, to your bar I brought both criminals,
And made my statement: heard their
counter-charge,

Nay, — their corroboration of my tale,
Nowise disputing its allegements, not
I' the main, not more 'than nature's
decency

Compels men to keep silence in this
kind, —

Only contending that the deeds avowed
Would take another colour and bear
excuse.

You were to judge between us; so you did.
You disregard the excuse, you breathe
away

The colour of innocence and leave guilt
black,

"Guilty" is the decision of the court,
And that I stand in consequence un-
touched,

One white integrity from head to heel.
Not guilty? Why then did you punish
them?

True, punishment has been inadequate —
'Tis not I only, not my friends that joke,

My foes that jeer, who echo "inade-
quate" —

For, by a chance that comes to help for
once,

The same case simultaneously was judged
At Arezzo, in the province of the Court
Where the crime had its beginning but not
end.

They then, deciding on but half o' the
crime,

The effraction, robbery, — features of the
fault

I never cared to dwell upon at Rome, —
What was it they adjudged as penalty

To Pompilia, — the one criminal o' the
pair

Amenable to their judgment, not the priest
Who is Rome's? Why, just imprison-
ment for life

I' the Stinche. There was Tuscany's
award

To a wife that robs her husband: you at
Rome —

Having to deal with adultery in a wife
And, in a priest, breach of the priestly
vow —

Give gentle sequestration for a month
In a manageable Convent, then release,

You call imprisonment, in the very house
O' the very couple, which the aim and end

Of the culprits' crime was — just to reach
and rest

And there take solace and defy me: well, —
This difference 'twixt their penalty and
yours

Is immaterial: make your penalty less —
Merely that she should henceforth wear

black gloves

And white fan, she who wore the opposite —
Why, all the same the fact o' the thing

subsists.

Reconcile to your conscience as you may,
Be it on your own heads, you pronounced
but half

O' the penalty for heinousness like hers
And his, that pays a fault at Carnival

Of comfit-pelting past discretion's law,

Or accident to handkerchief in Lent
Which falls perversely as a lady kneels
Abruptly, and but half conceals her neck!
I acquiesce for my part: punished, though
By a pin-point scratch, means guilty:
guilty means
— What have I been but innocent
hitherto?
Anyhow, here the offence, being punished
ends.

Ends? — for you deemed so, did you not,
sweet lords?
That was throughout the veritable aim —
O' the sentence light or heavy, — to redress
Recognized wrong? You righted me, I
think?
Well then, — what if I, at this last of all,
Demonstrate you, as my whole pleading
proves,
No particle of wrong received thereby
One atom of right? — that cure grew worse
disease?
That in the process you call "justice
done"
All along you have nipped away just inch
By inch the creeping climbing length of
plague
Breaking my tree of life from root to
branch,
And left me, after all and every act
Of your interference, — lightened of what
load?
At liberty wherein? Mere words and
wind!
"Now I was saved, now I should feel no
more
"The hot breath, find a respite from fixed
eye
"And vibrant tongue!" Why, scarce your
back was turned,
There was the reptile, that feigned death at
first,
Renewing its detested spire and spire
Around me, rising to such heights of hate
That, so far from mere purpose now to
crush
And coil itself on the remains of me,
Body and mind, and there flesh fang con-
tent,
Its aim is now to evoke life from death,
Make me anew, satisfy in my son
The hunger I may feed but never sate,
Tormented on to perpetuity, —
My son, whom, dead, I shall know, under-
stand,
Feel, hear, see, never more escape the sight
In heaven that's turned to hell, or hell re-
turned
(So rather say) to this same earth again, —
Moulded into the image and made one,
Fashioned of soul as featured like in
face,

First taught to laugh and ^{lie} and stand and
go
By that thief, poisoner and adulteress
I call Pompilia, he calls . . . sacred name,
Be unpronounced, be unpolluted here!
And last led up to the ^{story} and prize of
hate
By his . . . foster-father, Caponsacchi's
self,
The perjured priest, pink of conspirators,
Tricksters and knaves, yet polished, super-
fine,
Manhood to model adolescence by! 50
Lords, look on me, declare, — when, what
I show,
Is nothing more nor less than what you
deemed
And doled me out for justice, — what did
you say?
For reparation, restitution and more, —
Will you not thank, praise, bid me to your
breasts
For having done the thing you thought
to do,
And thoroughly trampled out sin's life at
last?
I have heightened phrase to make your
soft speech serve,
Doubled the blow you but essayed to
strike,
Carried into effect your mandate here 60
That else had fallen to ground: mere duty
done,
Oversight of the master just supplied
By zeal i' the servant. I, being used to
serve,
Have simply . . . what is it they charge
me with?
Blackened again, made legible once more
Your own decree, not permanently writ,
Rightly conceived but all too faintly
traced.
It reads efficient, now, comminatory,
A terror to the wicked, answers so
The mood o' the magistrate, the mind of 70
law.
Absolve, then, me, law's mere executant!
Protect your own defender, — save me,
Sirs!
Give me my life, give me my liberty,
My good name and my civic rights again!
It would be too fond, too complacent play
Into the hands o' the devil, should we lose
The game here, I for God: a soldier-bee
That yields his life, exenterate¹ with the
stroke
O' the sting that saves the hive. I need
that life.
Oh, never fear! I'll find life plenty use 80
Though it should last five years more, aches
and all!

¹ Exenterate: dii embowelled.

- For, first thing, there's the mother's age to help —
 Let her come break her heart upon my breast,
 Not on the blank stone of my nameless tomb!
 The fugitive brother has to be bidden back
 To the old routine, repugnant to the tread,
 Of daily suit and service to the Church, —
 Thro' gibe and jest, those stones that Shi-
 mei flung!
- Ay, and the spirit-broken youth at home,
 The awe-struck altar-ministrant, shall make
- 10 Amends for faith now palsied at the source,
 Shall see truth yet triumphant, justice yet
 A victor in the battle of this world!
 Give me — for last, best gift — my son again,
 Whom law makes mine, — I take him at your word,
 Mine be he, by miraculous mercy, lords!
 Let me lift up his youth and innocence
 To purify my palace, room by room
 Purged of the memories, lend from his bright brow
 Light to the old proud paladin my sire
- 20 Shrunk now for shame into the darkest shade
 O' the tapestry, showed him once and shrouds him now!
 Then may we, — strong from that re-kindled smile, —
 Go forward, face new times, the better day.
 And when, in times made better through your brave
 Decision now, — might but Utopia be! —
 Rome rife with honest women and strong men,
 Manners reformed, old habits back once more,
 Customs that recognize the standard worth, —
 The wholesome household rule in force again,
- 30 Husbands once more God's representative,
 Wives like the typical Spouse once more, and Priests
 No longer men of Belial, with no aim
 At leading silly women captive, but
 Of rising to such duties as yours now, —
 Then will I set my son at my right-hand
 And tell his father's story to this point,
 Adding "The task seemed superhuman, still
 "I dared and did it, trusting God and law:
 "And they approved of me: give praise to both!"
- 40 And if, for answer, he shall stoop to kiss
 My hand, and peradventure start thereat, —

I engage to smile "That was an accident
 "I' the necessary process, — just a trip
 "O' the torture-irons in their search for truth, —
 "Hardly misfortune, and no fault at all."

VI. — GIUSEPPE CAPONSACCHI.

ANSWER you, Sirs? Do I understand aright?
 Have patience! In this sudden smoke from hell, —
 So things disguise themselves, — I cannot see
 My own hand held thus broad before my face
 And know it again. Answer you? Then 5
 that means
 Tell over twice what I, the first time, told
 Six months ago: 'twas here, I do believe,
 Fronting you same three in this very room,
 I stood and told you: yet now no one laughs,
 Who then . . . nay, dear my lords, but laugh you did,
 As good as laugh, what in a judge we style
 Laughter — no levity, nothing indecorous, lords!
 Only, — I think I apprehend the mood:
 There was the blameless shrug, permissible smirk,
 The pen's pretence at play with the pursed 6
 mouth,
 The titter stifled in the hollow palm
 Which rubbed the eyebrow and caressed the nose,
 When I first told my tale: they meant, you know,
 "The sly one, all this we are bound be-
 lieve!
 "Well, he can say no other than what he says.
 "We have been young, too, — come, there's greater guilt!
 "Let him but decently disembroil himself,
 "Scramble from out the scrape nor move the mud, —
 "We solid ones may risk a finger-stretch!"
 And now you sit as grave, stare as aghast 70
 As if I were a phantom: now 'tis —
 "Friend,
 "Collect yourself!" — no laughing matter more —
 "Counsel the Court in this extremity.
 "Tell us again!" — tell that, for telling which,
 I got the jocular piece of punishment,
 Was sent to lounge a little in the place:
 Whence now of a sudden here you summon me
 To take the intelligence from just — your lips!

You, Judge Tommati, who then tittered most, —
 That she I helped eight months since to escape
 Her husband, was retaken by the same,
 Three days ago, if I have seized your sense, —
 (I being disallowed to interfere,
 Meddle or make in a matter none of mine,
 For you and law were guardians quite enough
 O' the innocent, without a pert priest's help) —
 And that he has butchered her accordingly,
 As she foretold and as myself believed, —
 And, so foretelling and believing so,
 We were punished, both of us, the merry way:
 Therefore, tell once again the tale! For what?
 Pompilia is only dying while I speak!
 Why does the mirth hang fire and miss the smile?
 My masters, there's an old book, you should con
 For strange adventures, applicable yet,
 'Tis stuffed with. Do you know that there was once
 This thing: a multitude of worthy folk
 Took recreation, watched a certain group
 Of soldiery intent upon a game, —
 How first they wrangled, but soon fell to play,
 Threw dice, — the best diversion in the world.
 A word in your ear, — they are now casting lots,
 Ay, with that gesture quaint and cry uncouth,
 For the coat of One murdered an hour ago!
 I am a priest, — talk of what I have learned.
 Pompilia is bleeding out her life belike,
 Gasping away the latest breath of all,
 This minute, while I talk — not while you laugh?
 Yet, being sobered now, what is it you ask
 By way of explanation? There's the fact!
 It seems to fill the universe with sight
 And sound, — from the four corners of this earth
 Tells itself over, to my sense at least.
 But you may want it lower set i' the scale, —
 Too vast, too close it clangs in the ear, perhaps;
 You'd stand back just to comprehend it more.
 Well then, let me, the hollow rock, condense
 The voice o' the sea and wind, interpret you

The mystery of this murder. God above!
 It is too paltry, such a transference
 O' the storm's roar to the cranny of the stone!

This deed, you saw begin — why does its end
 Surprise you? Why should the event enforce
 The lesson, we ourselves learned, she and I,
 From the first o' the fact, and taught you, all in vain?
 This Guido from whose throat you took my grasp,
 Was this man to be favoured, now, or feared,
 Let do his will, or have his will restrained, so
 In the relation with Pompilia? Say!
 Did any other man need interpose
 — Oh, though first comer, though as strange at the work
 As fribble must be, coxcomb, fool that's near
 To knave as, say, a priest who fears the world
 Was he bound brave the peril, save the doomed,
 Or go on, sing his snatch and pluck his flower,
 Keep the straight path and let the victim die?
 I held so; you decided otherwise,
 Saw no such peril, therefore no such need 60
 To stop song, loosen flower, and leave path. Law,
 Law was aware and watching, would suffice,
 Wanted no priest's intrusion, palpably
 Pretence, too manifest a subterfuge!
 Whereupon I, priest, coxcomb, fribble and fool,
 Ensconced me in my corner, thus rebuked,
 A kind of culprit, over-zealous hound
 Kicked for his pains to kennel; I gave place
 To you, and let the law reign paramount:
 I left Pompilia to your watch and ward, 70
 And now you point me — there and thus she lies!

Men, for the last time, what do you want with me?
 Is it, — you acknowledge, as it were, a use,
 A profit in employing me? — at length
 I may conceivably help the august law?
 I am free to break the blow, next hawk that swoops
 On next dove, nor miss much of good repute?
 Or what if this your summons, after all,
 Be but the form of mere release, no more,
 Which turns the key and lets the captive 80 go?

I have paid enough in person at Civita,
Am free, — what more need I concern me
with?

Thank you! I am rehabilitated then,
A very reputable priest. But she —
The glory of life, the beauty of the world,
The splendour of heaven, . . . well, Sirs,
does no one move?

Do I speak ambiguously? The glory, I
say,

And the beauty, I say, and splendour, still
say I,

Who, priest and trained to live my whole
life long

10 On beauty and splendour, solely at their
source,

God! — have thus recognised my food in
her,

You tell me, that's fast dying while we
talk,

Pompilia! How does lenity to me,
Remit one death-bed pang to her? Come,
smile!

The proper wink at the hot-headed youth
Who lets his soul show, through trans-
parent words,

The mundane love that's sin and scandal
too!

You are all struck acquiescent now, it
seems:

20 It seems the oldest, gravest signor here,
Even the redoubtable Tommati, sits

Chop-fallen, — understands how law might
take

Service like mine, of brain and heart and
hand,

In good part. Better late than never, law
You understand of a sudden, gospel too

Has a claim here, may possibly pronounce
Consistent with my priesthood, worthy

Christ,
That I endeavoured to save Pompilia?

Then,

You were wrong, you see: that's well to
see, though late:

That's all we may expect of man, this side

30 The grave: his good is — knowing he is bad:
Thus will it be with us when the books ope

And we stand at the bar on judgment-day.
Well then, I have a mind to speak, see
cause

To relume the quenched flax by this
dreadful light,

Burn my soul out in showing you the truth.
I heard, last time I stood here to be judged

What is priest's duty, — labour to pluck
tares

And weed the corn of Molinism; let me
Make you hear, this time, how, in such a
case,

40 Man, be he in the priesthood or at plough,
Mindful of Christ or marching step by

step

With . . . what's his style, the other
potentate

Who bids have courage and keep honour
safe,

Nor let minuter admonition tease? —
How he is bound, better or worse, to act.

Earth will not end through this misjudg-
ment, no!

For you and the others like you sure to
come,

Fresh work is sure to follow, — wicked-
ness

That wants withstanding. Many a man
of blood,

Many a man of guile will clamour yet, 57
Bid you redress his grievance, — as he
clutched

The prey, forsooth a stranger stepper
between,

And there's the good gripe in pure waste
My part

Is done; i' the doing it, I pass away
Out of the world. I want no more with
earth.

Let me, in heaven's name, use the very
snuff

O' the taper in one last spark shall show
truth

For a moment, show Pompilia who was
true!

Not for her sake, but yours: if she is dead,
Oh, Sirs, she can be loved by none of you 60

Most or least priestly! Saints, to do us
good,

Must be in heaven, I seem to understand;
We never find them saints before, at least.

Be her first prayer then presently for you —
She has done the good to me . . .

What is all this?

There, I was born, have lived, shall die, a
fool!

This is a foolish outset: — might with
cause

Give colour to the very lie o' the man,
The murderer, — make as if I loved his
wife,

In the way he called love. He is the fool 70
there!

Why, had there been in me the touch of
taint,

I had picked up so much of knaves'-policy
As hide it, keep one hand pressed on the
place

Suspected of a spot would damn us both.
Or no, not her! — not even if any of you

Dares think that I, i' the face of death, her
death

That's in my eyes and ears and brain and
heart,

Lie, — if he does, let him! I mean to say,
So he stop there, stay thought from
smirching her

The snow-white soul that angels fear to 8
take

Untenderly. But, all the same, I know
 I too am taintless, and I bare my breast.
 You can't think, men as you are, all of you,
 But that, to hear thus suddenly such an end
 Of such a wonderful white soul, that comes
 Of a man and murderer calling the white
 black,
 Must shake me, trouble and disadvantage.
 Sirs,
 Only seventeen!

Why, good and wise you are!

You might at the beginning stop my
 mouth:

So, none would be to speak for her, that
 knew.

I talk impertinently, and you bear,
 All the same. This it is to have to do
 With honest hearts: they easily may err,
 But in the main they wish well to the truth.
 You are Christians; somehow, no one ever
 plucked

A rag, even, from the body of the Lord,
 To wear and mock with, but, despite him-
 self,

He looked the greater and was the better.

Yes,

I shall go on now. Does she need or not
 I keep calm? Calm I'll keep as monk that
 croons

Transcribing battle, earthquake, famine,
 plague,

From parchment to his cloister's chronicle.
 Not one word more from the point now!

I begin.

Yes, I am one of your body and a priest.

Also I am a younger son o' the House

Oldest now, greatest once, in my birth-
 town

Arezzo, I recognise no equal there —
 (I want all arguments, all sorts of arms
 That seem to serve, — use this for a
 reason, wait!)

Not therefore thrust into the Church, be-
 cause

'Tis the piece of bread one gets there. We
 were first

Of Fiesole, that rings still with the fame
 Of Capo-in-Sacco our progenitor:

When Florence ruined Fiesole, our folk
 Migrated to the victor-city, and there
 Flourished, — our palace and our tower
 attest,

In the Old Mercato, — this was years ago,
 Four hundred, full, — no, it wants four-
 teen just.

Our arms are those of Fiesole itself,
 The shield quartered with white and red:
 a branch

Are the Salviati of us, nothing more.
 That were good help to the Church? But
 better still —

Not simply for the advantage of my birth

I' the way of the world, was I proposed for
 priest;

But because there's an illustration, late
 I' the day, that's loved and looked to as a
 saint

Still in Arezzo, he was bishop of,
 Sixty years since: he spent to the last doitt
 His bishop's revenue among the poor,
 And used to tend the needy and the sick, 50
 Barefoot, because of his humility.
 He it was, — when the Granduke Ferdi-
 nand¹

Sware he would raze our city, plough the
 place

And sow it with salt, because we Aretines
 Had tied a rope about the neck, to hale
 The statue of his father from its base
 For hate's sake, — he availed by prayers
 and tears

To pacify the Duke and save the town.
 This was my father's father's brother.

You see,

For his sake, how it was I had a right 60
 To the self-same office, bishop in the egg,
 So, grew I' the garb and prattled in the
 school,

Was made expect, from infancy almost,
 The proper mood o' the priest; till time
 ran by

And brought the day when I must read the
 vows,

Declare the world renounced and under-
 take

To become priest and leave probation, —
 leap

Over the ledge into the other life,
 Having gone trippingly hitherto up to the
 height

O'er the wan water. Just a vow to read! 70

I stopped short awe-struck. "How shall
 holiest flesh

"Engage to keep such vow inviolate,
 "How much less mine? I know myself too
 weak,

"Unworthy! Choose a worthier stronger
 man!"

And the very Bishop smiled and stopped
 my mouth

In its mid-protestation. "Incapable?
 "Qualmish of conscience? Thou ingenu-
 ous boy!

"Clear up the clouds and cast thy scruples
 far!

"I satisfy thee there's an easier sense
 "Wherein to take such vow than suits the 80
 first

"Rough rigid reading. Mark what makes
 all smooth,

"Nay, has been even a solace to myself!

"The Jews who needs must, in their syna-
 gogue,

¹ *Ferdinand*: Ferdinand II., Grand-duke of
 Tuscany 1621-1670, one of the Medici.

- "Utter sometimes the holy name of God,
 "A thing their superstition boggles at,
 "Pronounce aloud the ineffable sacro-
 sanct, —
 "How does their shrewdness help them?
 In this wise:
 "Another set of sounds they substitute,
 "Jumble so consonants and vowels — how
 "Should I know? — that there grows from
 out the old
 "Quite a new word that means the very
 same —
 "And o'er the hard place slide they with a
 smile.
 10 "Giuseppe Maria Caponsacchi mine,
 "Nobody wants you in these latter days
 "To prop the Church by breaking your
 back-bone, —
 "As the necessary way was once, we know,
 "When Diocletian flourished and his like.
 "That building of the buttress-work was
 done
 "By martyrs and confessors: let it bide,
 "Add not a brick, but, where you see a
 chink,
 "Stick in a sprig of ivy or root a rose
 "Shall make amends and beautify the pile!
 20 "We profit as you were the painfulest
 "O' the martyrs, and you prove yourself a
 match
 "For the cruelest confessor ever was,
 "If you march boldly up and take your
 stand
 "Where their blood soaks, their bones yet
 strew the soil,
 "And cry 'Take notice, I the young and
 free
 "'And well-to-do i' the world, thus leave
 the world,
 "'Cast in my lot thus with no gay young
 world
 "'But the grand old Church: she tempts
 me of the two!
 "Renounce the world? Nay, keep and
 give it us!
 30 "Let us have you, and boast of what you
 bring.
 "We want the pick o' the earth to practise
 with,
 "Not its offscouring, halt and deaf and
 blind
 "In soul and body. There's a rubble-
 stone
 "Unfit for the front o' the building, stuff to
 stow
 "In a gap behind and keep us weather-
 tight;
 "There's porphyry for the prominent
 place. Good luck!
 "Saint Paul has had enough and to spare,
 I trow,
 "Of ragged run-away Onesimus:
 "He wants the right-hand with the signet-
 ring
- "Of King Agrippa, now, to shake and use. 41
 "I have a heavy scholar cloistered up,
 "Close under lock and key, kept at his task
 "Of letting Fénelon know the fool he is,
 "In a book I promise Christendom next
 Spring.
 "Why, if he covets so much meat, the
 clown,
 "As a lark's wing next Friday, or, any day,
 "Diversion beyond catching his own fleas,
 "He shall be properly swinged, I promise
 him.
 "But you, who are so quite another paste
 "Of a man, — do you obey me? Cultivate 50
 vate
 "Assiduous that superior gift you have
 "Of making madrigals — (who told me?
 Ah!)
 "Get done a Marinesque Adoniad¹
 straight
 "With a pulse o' the blood a-pricking, here
 and there,
 "That I may tell the lady: 'And he's
 ours!'
- So I became a priest: those terms
 changed all,
 I was good enough for that, nor cheated so;
 I could live thus and still hold head erect.
 Now you see why I may have been before
 A fribble and coxcomb, yet, as priest, break 60
 word
 Nowise, to make you disbelieve me now.
 I need that you should know my truth.
 Well, then,
 According to prescription did I live,
 — Conformed myself, both read the
 breviary
 And wrote the rhymes, was punctual to my
 place
 I' the Pieve,² and as diligent at my post
 Where beauty and fashion rule. I throve
 apace,
 Sub-deacon, Canon, the authority
 For delicate play at tarocs,³ and arbiter
 O' the magnitude of fan-mounts: all the 70
 while
 Wanting no whit the advantage of a hint
 Benignant to the promising pupil, — thus:
 "Enough attention to the Countess now,
 "The young one; 'tis her mother rules the
 roast,
 "We know where, and puts in a word: go
 pay
 "Devoir to-morrow morning after mass!
 "Break that rash promise to preach,
 Passion-week!

¹ *A Marinesque Adoniad*: alluding to the *Adone* of Giovanni Battista Marin (or Marini), published in 1623, and very popular during the seventeenth century.

² *Pieve*: Sta. Maria della Pieve, one of the principal churches in Arezzo.

³ *Tarocs*: a card game.

"Has it escaped you the Archbishop grunts
 "And snuffles when one grieves to tell his Grace
 "No soul dares treat the subject of the day
 "Since his own masterly handling it (ha, ha!)"
 "Five years ago, — when somebody could help
 "And touch up an odd phrase in time of need,
 "(He, he!) — and somebody helps you, my son!"
 "Therefore, don't prove so indispensable
 "At the Pieve, sit more loose i' the seat, nor grow
 to "A fixture by attendance morn and eve!
 "Arezzo's just a haven midway Rome —
 "Rome's the eventual harbour, — make for port,
 "Crowd sail, crack cordage! And your cargo be
 "A polished presence, a genteel manner, wit
 "At will, and tact at every pore of you!
 "I sent our lump of learning, Brother Clout,
 "And Father Slouch, our piece of piety,
 "To see Rome and try suit the Cardinal.
 "Thither they clump-clumped, beads and book in hand,
 to "And ever since 'tis meat for man and maid
 "How both flopped down, prayed blessing on bent pate
 "Bald many an inch beyond the tonsure's need,
 "Never once dreaming, the two moony dolts,
 "There's nothing moves his Eminence so much
 "As — far from all this awe at sanctitude —
 "Heads that wag, eyes that twinkle, modified mirth
 "At the closet-lectures on the Latin tongue
 "A lady learns so much by, we know where.
 "Why, body o' Bacchus, you should crave his rule
 to "For pauses in the elegiac couplet, chasms
 "Permissible only to Catullus! There!
 "Now go to duty: brisk, break Priscian's head!
 "By reading the day's office — there's no help.
 "You've Ovid in your poke to plaster that;
 "Amen! at the end of all: then sup with me!"

Well, after three or four years of this life,
 In prosecution of my calling, I

* Break Priscian's head: break the rules of classical Latin grammar, on which Priscian was the most famous ancient authority.

Found myself at the theatre one night
 With a brother Canon, in a mood and mind
 Proper enough for the place, amused or no: 40
 When I saw enter, stand, and scat herself
 A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange and sad.

It was as when, in our cathedral once,
 As I got yawningly through matin-song,
 I saw *facchini*² bear a burden up,
 Base it on the high-altar, break away
 A board or two, and leave the thing inside
 Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I looked,

There was the Rafael! I was still one stare,
 When — "Nay, I'll make her give you 50
 back your gaze" —

Said Canon Conti; and at the word he tossed

A paper-twist of comfits to her lap,
 And dodged and in a trice was at my back
 Nodding from over my shoulder. Then she turned,

Looked our way, smiled the beautiful sad strange smile.

"Is not she fair? 'Tis my new cousin," said he:

"The fellow lurking there i' the black o' the box

"Is Guido, the old scapegrace: she's his wife,

"Married three years since: how his Countship sulks!

"He has brought little back from Rome 6
 beside,

"After the bragging, bullying. A fair face,

"And — they do say — a pocketful of gold
 "When he can worry both her parents dead.

"I don't go much there, for the chamber's cold

"And the coffee pale. I got a turn at first
 "Paying my duty: I observed they crouched

"— The two old frightened family spectres — close

"In a corner, each on each like mouse on mouse

"I' the cat's cage: ever since, I stay at home.

"Hallo, there's Guido, the black, mean and 70
 small,

"Bends his brows on us — please to bend your own

"On the shapely nether limbs of Light-skirts there

"By way of a diversion! I was a fool
 "To fling the sweetmeats. Prudence, for God's love!

"To-morrow I'll make my peace, e'en tell some fib,

"Try if I can't find means to take you there."

* *Facchini*: porters.

That night and next day did the gaze endure,
Burnt to my brain, as sunbeam thro' shut eyes,
And not once changed the beautiful sad strange smile.

At vespers Conti leaned beside my seat
I' the choir, — part said, part sung —

"In ex-cel-sis —

*"All's to no purpose; I have louted low,
"But he saw you staring — quia sub —*
don't incline

"To know you nearer: him we would not hold

"For Hercules, — the man would lick your shoe

10 *"If you and certain efficacious friends
"Managed him warily, — but there's the wife:*

*"Spare her, because he beats her, as it is,
"She's breaking her heart quite fast enough — jam tu —*

*"So, be you rational and make amends
"With little Light-skirts yonder — in*
secula

"Secu-lo-o-o-rum. Ah, you rogue! Every one knows

"What great dame she makes jealous: one against one,

"Play, and win both!"

Sirs, ere the week was out,
I saw and said to myself, "Light-skirts
hides teeth

20 *"Would make a dog sick, — the great dame shows spite*

"Should drive a cat mad: 'tis but poor work this —

"Counting one's fingers till the sonnet's crowned.

"I doubt much if Marino really be

"A better bard than Dante after all.

"'Tis more amusing to go pace at eve

"I' the Duomo, — watch the day's last gleam outside

*"Turn, as into a skirt of God's own robe,
"Those lancet-windows' jewelled mir-
acle, —*

*"Than go eat the Archbishop's ortolans,
30 "Digest his jokes. Luckily Lent is near:*

*"Who cares to look will find me in my stall
"At the Pieve, constant to this faith at least —*

"Never to write a canzonet any more."

So, next week, 'twas my patron spoke
abrupt,

In altered guise. "Young man, can it be
true

"That after all your promise of sound
fruit,

"You have kept away from Countess
young or old

"And gone play truant in church all day
long?

"Are you turning Molinist?" I answered
quick:

"Sir, what if I turned Christian? It might 40
be.

"The fact is, I am troubled in my mind,
"Beset and pressed hard by some novel
thoughts.

"This your Arezzo is a limited world;

"There's a strange Pope, — 'tis said, a
priest who thinks.

"Rome is the port, you say: to Rome I go.

"I will live alone, one does so in a crowd,

"And look into my heart a little." "Lent

"Ended," — I told friends — "I shall go
to Rome."

One evening I was sitting in a muse
Over the opened "Summa,"¹ darkened 50
round

By the mid-March twilight, thinking how
my life

Had shaken under me, — broke short
indeed

And showed the gap 'twixt what is, what
should be, —

And into what abysm the soul may slip,
Leave aspiration here, achievement there,

Lacking omnipotence to connect ex-
tremes —

Thinking moreover . . . oh, thinking, if
you like,

How utterly dissociated was I

A priest and celibate, from the sad strange
wife

Of Guido, — just as an instance to the 60
point,

Nought more, — how I had a whole store
of strengths

Eating into my heart, which craved em-
ploy,

And she, perhaps, need of a finger's help, —
And yet there was no way in the wide
world

To stretch out mine and so relieve my-
self, —

How when the page o' the Summa preached
its best,

Her smile kept glowing out of it, as to
mock

The silence we could break by no one
word, —

There came a tap without the chamber-
door,

And a whisper; when I bade who tapped 70
speak out.

And, in obedience to my summons, last
In glided a masked muffled mystery,

Laid lightly a letter on the opened book,
Then stood with folded arms and foot
demure,

Pointing as if to mark the minutes' flight.

¹ Summa: the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas
Aquinas.

I took the letter, read to the effect
That she, I lately flung the comforts to,
Had a warm heart to give me in exchange,
And gave it, — loved me and confessed it
thus,
And bade me render thanks by word of
mouth,
Going that night to such a side o' the house
Where the small terrace overhangs a street
Blind and deserted, not the street in front:
Her husband being away, the surly patch,
10 At his villa of Vittiano.

"And you?" — I asked:
"What may you be?" "Count Guido's
kind of maid —
"Most of us have two functions in his
house.
"We all hate him, the lady suffers much,
"Tis just we show compassion, furnish
help,
"Specially since her choice is fixed so well.
"What answer may I bring to cheer the
sweet
"Pompilia?"

Then I took a pen and wrote
"No more of this! That you are fair, I
know:
"But other thoughts now occupy my mind.
20 "I should not thus have played the insen-
sible
"Once on a time. What made you, —
may one ask, —
"Marry your hideous husband? 'Twas
a fault,
"And now you taste the fruit of it. Fare-
well."

"There!" smiled I as she snatched it and
was gone —
"There, let the jealous miscreant, —
Guido's self,
"Whose mean soul grins through this
transparent trick, —
"Be balked so far, defrauded of his
aim!
"What fund of satisfaction to the knave,
"Had I kicked this his messenger down
stairs,
30 "Trussed to the middle of her impudence,
"And set his heart at ease so! No, indeed!
"There's the reply which he shall turn and
twist
"At pleasure, snuff at till his brain grow
drunk,
"As the bear does when he finds a scented
glove
"That puzzles him, — a hand and yet no
hand,
"Of other perfume than his own foul paw!
"Last month, I had doubtless chosen to
play the dupe,
"Accepted the mock-invitation, kept

"The sham appointment, cudgel beneath
cloak

"Prepared myself to pull the appointer's
self

"Out of the window from his hiding-place

"Behind the gown of this part-messenger

"Part-mistress who would personate the
wife.

"Such had seemed once a jest permissible:

"Now I am not i' the mood."

Back next morn brought

The messenger, a second letter in hand.

"You are cruel, Thyrsis, and Myrtilla
moans

"Neglected but adores you, makes request

"For mercy: why is it you dare not come?

"Such virtue is scarce natural to your age. 50

"You must love someone else; I hear you
do,

"The Baron's daughter or the Advocate's
wife,

"Or both, — all's one, would you make
me the third —

"I take the crumbs from table gratefully

"Nor grudge who feasts there. 'Faith, I
blush and blaze!

"Yet if I break all bounds, there's reason
sure.

"Are you determinedly bent on Rome?

"I am wretched here, a monster tortures
me:

"Carry me with you! Come and say you
will!

"Concert this very evening! Do not write! 60

"I am ever at the window of my room

"Over the terrace, at the *Ave*. Come!"

I questioned — lifting half the woman's
mask

To let her smile loose. "So, you gave my
line

"To the merry lady?" "She kissed off the
wax,

"And put what paper was not kissed away,

"In her bosom to go burn: but merry, no!

"She wept all night when evening brought
no friend,

"Alone, the unkind missive at her breast;

"Thus Philomel, the thorn at her breast too, 70

"Sings" . . . "Writes this second letter?"

"Even so!

"Then she may peep at vespers forth?" —

"What risk

"Do we run o' the husband?" — "Ah, —
no risk at all!

"He is more stupid even than jealous.
Ah —

"That was the reason? Why, the man's
away!

"Beside, his bugbear is that friend of yours,

"Fat little Canon Conti. He fears him,

"How should he dream of you? I told 84
you truth:

"He goes to the villa at Vittiano — 'tis

"The time when Spring-sap rises in the vine —
 "Spends the night there. And then his wife's a child:
 "Does he think a child outwits him? A mere child:
 "Yet so full grown, a dish for any duke.
 "Don't quarrel longer with such cates, but come!"

I wrote "In vain do you solicit me.
 "I am a priest: and you are wedded wife,
 "Whatever kind of brute your husband prove.
 "I have scruples, in short. Yet should you really show
 "Sign^l at the window . . . but nay, best be good!
 "My thoughts are elsewhere." "Take her that!"

"Again
 "Let the incarnate meanness, cheat and spy,
 "Mean to the marrow of him, make his heart
 "His food, anticipate hell's worm once more!
 "Let him watch shivering at the window — ay,
 "And let this hybrid, this his light-of-love
 "And lackey-of-lies, — a sage economy,
 "Paid with embracings for the rank brass coin, —
 "Let her report and make him chuckle o'er

so "The break-down of my resolution now,
 "And lour at disappointment in good time!
 "— So tantalise and so enrage by turns,
 "Until the two fall each on the other like
 "Two famished spiders, as the coveted fly
 "That toys long, leaves their net and them at last!"

And so the missives followed thick and fast
 For a month, say, — I still came at every turn

On the soft sly adder, endlong 'neath my tread.

I was met i' the street, made sign to in the church,

30 A slip was found i' the door-sill, scribbled word

'Twixt page and page o' the prayer-book in my place.

A crumpled thing dropped even before my feet,

Pushed through the blind, above the terrace-rail,

As I passed, by day, the very window once.
 And ever from corners would be peering up

The messenger, with the self-same demand,
 "Obdurate still, no flesh but adamant?"

"Nothing to cure the wound, assuage the throe

"O' the sweetest lamb that ever loved a bear?"

And ever my one answer in one tone — 44

"Go your ways, temptress! Let a priest read, pray,

"Unplagued of vain talk, visions not for him!

"In the end, you'll have your will and ruin me!"

One day, a variation: thus I read:

"You have gained little by timidity.

"My husband has found out my love at length,

"Sees cousin Conti was the stalking-horst,
 "And you the game he covered, poor fat soul!

"My husband is a formidable foe,
 "Will stick at nothing to destroy you. 50

Stand
 "Prepared, or better, run till you reach Rome!

"I bade you visit me, when the last place

"My tyrant would have turned suspicious at,

"Or cared to seek you in, was . . . why say, where?

"But now all's changed: beside, the season's past

"At the villa, — wants the master's eye no more.

"Anyhow, I beseech you, stay away
 "From the window! He might well be posted there."

I wrote — "You raise my courage, or call up

"My curiosity, who am but man. 60

"Tell him he owns the palace, not the street
 "Under — that's his and yours and mine alike.

"If it should please me pad the path this eve,

"Guido will have two troubles, first to get
 "Into a rage and then get out again.

"Be cautious, though: at the *Ave!*"
 You of the Court!

When I stood question here and reached this point

O' the narrative, — search notes and see and say

If someone did not interpose with smile
 And sneer, "And prithee why so confident? 70

"That the husband must, of all needs, not the wife,

"Fabricate thus, — what if the lady loved?
 "What if she wrote the letters?"

Learned Sir,
 I told you there's a picture in our church.

Well, if a low-browed verger sidled up
 Bringing me, like a blotch, on his prod's point,

A transfixed scorpion, let the reptile writhe,

And then said "See a thing that Rafael made —

'This venom issued from Madonna's mouth!'

I should reply, "Rather, the soul of you
"Has issued from your body, like from like,
"By way of the ordure-corner!"

But no less,

I tired of the same long black teasing lie
Obtruded thus at every turn; the pest
Was far too near the picture, anyhow:

One does Madonna service, making clowns
Remove their hung-deap from the sacristy.
"I will to the window, as he tempts," said I:

"Yes, whom the easy love has failed allure,
"This new bait of adventure tempts, —
thinks he.

"Though the imprisoned lady keeps afar,
"There will they lie in ambush, heads
alert,

"Kith, kin, and Count mustered to bite my
heel.

"No mother nor brother viper of the brood
"Shall scuttle off without the instructive
bruise!"

So I went: crossed street and street:
"The next street's turn,

"I stand beneath the terrace, see, above,
"The black of the ambush-window. Then,
in place

"Of hand's throw of soft prelude over lute,
"And cough that clears way for the ditty
last," —

I began to laugh already — "he will have
"Out of the hole you hide in, on to the
front,

"Count Guido Franceschini, show your-
self!

"Hear what a man thinks of a thing like
you,

"And after, take this foulness in your
face!"

The words lay living on my lip, I made

The one-turn more — and there at the
window stood,
Framed in its black square length, with
lamp in hand,

Pompilia; the same great, grave, grievful
air

As stands i' the dusk, on altar that I know,
Left alone with one moonbeam in her cell,
Our Lady of all the Sorrows. Ere I
kneelt —

Assured myself that she was flesh and
blood —

She had looked one look and vanished.

I thought — "Just so:

"It was herself, they have set her there to
watch —

"Stationed to see some wedding-band go
by,

"On fair pretence that she must bless the 4c
bride,

"Or wait some funeral with friends wind
past,

"And crave peace for the corpse that
claims its due.

"She never dreams they used her for a
snare,

"And now withdraw the bait has served its
turn.

"Well done, the husband, who shall fare
the worse!"

"And on my lip again was — "Out with
thee,

"Guido!" When all at once she re-ap-
peared;

But, this time, on the terrace overhead,
So close above me, she could almost touch
My head if she bent down; and she did 5c
bend,

While I stood still as stone, all eye, all
ear.

She began — "You have sent me letters,
Sir:

"I have read none, I can neither read nor
write;

"But she you gave them to, a woman here,
"One of the people in whose power I am,

"Partly explained their sense, I think, to
me

"Obliged to listen while she inculcates
"That you, a priest, can dare love me, a
wife,

"Desire to live or die as I shall bid,
"She makes me listen if I will or no) 6c

"Because you saw my face a single time.
"It cannot be she says the thing you mean;

"Such wickedness were deadly to us both:
"But good true love would help me now so
much —

"I tell myself, you may mean good and
true.

"You offer me, I seem to understand,
"Because I am in poverty and starve,

"Much money, where one piece would
save my life.

"The silver cup upon the altar-cloth
"Is neither yours to give nor mine to take; 7c

"But I might take one bit of bread there-
from,

"Since I am starving, and return the rest,
"Yet do no harm: this is my very case.

"I am in that strait, I may not dare abstain
"From so much of assistance as would
bring

"The guilt of theft on neither you nor me;
"But no superfluous particle of aid.

"I think, if you will let me state my case,
"Even had you been so fancy-fevered here,

"Not your sound self, you must grow 8c
healthy now —

"Care only to bestow what I can take.
"That it is only you in the wide world,

"Knowing me nor in thought nor word nor deed,

"Who, all unprompted save by your own heart,

"Come proffering assistance now, — were strange

"But that my whole life is so strange: as strange

"It is, my husband whom I have not wronged

"Should hate and harm me. For his own soul's sake,

"Hinder the harm! But there is something more,

"And that the strangest: it has got to be

"Somehow for my sake too, and yet not mine,

to "— This is a riddle — for some kind of sake

"Not any clearer to myself than you,

"And yet as certain as that I draw breath, —

"I would fain live, not die — oh no, not die!

"My case is, I was dwelling happily

"At Rome with those dear Comparini, called

"Father and mother to me; when at once

"I found I had become Count Guido's wife:

"Who then, not waiting for a moment, changed

"Into a fury of fire, if once he was

20 "Merely a man: his face threw fire at mine,

"He laid a hand on me that burned all peace,

"All joy, all hope, and last all fear away,

"Dipping the bough of life, so pleasant once,

"In fire which shrivelled leaf and bud alike,

"Burning not only present life but past,

"Which you might think was safe beyond his reach.

"He reached it, though, since that beloved pair,

"My father once, my mother all those years,

"That loved me so, now say I dreamed a dream

30 "And bid me wake, henceforth no child of theirs,

"Never in all the time their child at all.

"Do you understand? I cannot: yet so it is.

"Just so I say of you that proffer help:

"I cannot understand what prompts your soul,

"I simply needs must see that it is so,

"Only one strange and wonderful thing more.

"They came here with me, those two dear ones, kept

"All the old love up, till my husband, till

"His people here so tortured them, they fled.

"And now, is it because I grow in flesh 44

"And spirit one with him their torturer,

"That they, renouncing him, must cast off me?

"If I were graced by God to have a child,

"Could I one day deny God graced me so?

"Then, since my husband hates me, I shall break

"No law that reigns in this fell house of hate,

"By using — letting have effect so much

"Of hate as hides me from that whole of hate

"Would take my life which I want and must have —

"Just as I take from your excess of love 50

"Enough to save my life with, all I need.

"The Archbishop said to murder me were sin:

"My leaving Guido were a kind of death

"With no sin, — more death, he must answer for.

"Hear now what death to him and life to you

"I wish to pay and owe. Take me to Rome!

"You go to Rome, the servant makes me hear.

"Take me as you would take a dog, I think,

"Masterless left for strangers to maltreat:

"Take me home like that — leave me in 60 the house

"Where the father and the mother are; and soon

"They'll come to know and call me by my name,

"Their child once more, since child I am, for all

"They now forget me, which is the worst o' the dream —

"And the way to end dreams is to break them, stand,

"Walk, go: then help me to stand, walk and go!

"The Governor said the strong should help the weak:

"You know how weak the strongest women are.

"How could I find my way there by myself?

"I cannot even call out, make them hear — 70

"Just as in dreams: I have tried and proved the fact.

"I have told this story and more to good great men,

"The Archbishop and the Governor: they smiled.

"Stop your mouth, fair one! — presently they frowned,

"Get you gone, disengage you from our feet!

"I went in my despair to an old priest,

"Only a friar, no great man like these two,

"But good, the Augustinian, people name
"Romano, — he confessed me two months
since:

"He fears God, why then needs he fear the
world?

"And when he questioned how it came
about

"That I was found in danger of a sin —
"Despair of any help from providence, —

"Since, though your husband outrage
you,' said he,

"That is a case too common, the wives
die

"Or live, but do not sin so deep as this' —

10 "Then I told — what I never will tell you —

"How, worse than husband's hate, I had
to bear

"The love, — soliciting to shame called
love, —

"Of his brother, — the young idle priest
i' the house

"With only the devil to meet there. 'This
is grave —

"Yes, we must interfere: I counsel, —
write

"To those who used to be your parents
once,

"Of dangers here, bid them convey you
hence!"

"But," said I, 'when I neither read nor
write?"

"Then he took pity and promised 'I will
write.'

20 "If he did so, — why, they are dumb or
dead:

"Either they give no credit to the tale,
"Or else, wrapped wholly up in their own
joy

"Of such escape, they care not who cries,
still

"I' the clutches. Anyhow, no word
arrives.

"All such extravagance and dreadfulness
"Seems incident to dreaming, cured one
way, —

"Wake me! The letter I received this
morn,

"Said — if the woman spoke your very
sense —

"You would die for me:' I can believe it
now:

30 "For now the dream gets to involve your-
self.

"First of all, you seemed wicked and not
good,

"In writing me those letters: you came in
"Like a thief upon me. I this morning
said

"In my extremity, entreat the thief!
"Try if he have in him no honest touch!

"A thief might save me from a murderer.
"Twas a thief said the last kind word to
Christ:

"Christ took the kindness and forgave the
theft:

"And so did I prepare what I now say.

"But now, that you stand and I see your 40
face,

"Though you have never uttered word
yet, — well, I know,

"Here too has been dream-work, delusion
too,

"And that at no time, you with the eyes
here,

"Ever intended to do wrong by me,
"Nor wrote such letters therefore. It is
false,

"And you are true, have been true, will be
true.

"To Rome then, — when is it you take
me there?

"Each minute lost is mortal. When? —
I ask."

I answered, "It shall be when it can be.
"I will go hence and do your pleasure, find 50
"The sure and speedy means of travel, then

"Come back and take you to your friends
in Rome.

"There wants a carriage, money and the
rest, —

"A day's work by to-morrow at this time.
"How shall I see you and assure escape?"

She replied, "Pass, to-morrow at this hour.
"If I am at the open window, well:

"If I am absent, drop a handkerchief
"And walk by! I shall see from where I
watch,

"And know that all is done. Return next 60
eve,

"And next, and so till we can meet and
speak!"

"To-morrow at this hour I pass," said I.
She was withdrawn.

Here is another point
I bid you pause at. When I told thus far,
Someone said, subtly, "Here at least was
found

"Your conviction in error, — you per-
ceived

"The spirit of the letters, in a sort,
"Had been the lady's, if the body should
be

"Supplied by Guido: say, he forged them
all!

"Here was the unforged fact — she sent 70
for you,

"Spontaneously elected you to help,
"— What men call, loved you: Guido
read her mind,

"Gave it expression to assure the world
"The case was just as he foresaw: he
wrote,

"She spoke."

Sirs, that first simile serves still, —

That falsehood of a scorpion hatched, I
 say,
 Nowhere i' the world but in Madouna's
 mouth.
 Go on! Suppose, that falsehood foiled,
 next eve
 Pictured Madonna raised her painted
 hand,
 Fixed the face Rafael bent above the Babe,
 On my face as I flung me at her feet:
 Such miracle vouchsafed and manifest,
 Would that prove the first lying tale was
 true?

Pomplia spoke, and I at once received,
 10 Accepted my own fact, my miracle
 Self-authorised and self-explained, — she
 chose

To summon me and signify her choice.
 Afterward, — oh! I gave a passing glance
 To a certain ugly cloud-shape, goblin-
 shred
 Of hell-smoke hurrying past the splendid
 moon

Out now to tolerate no darkness more,
 And saw right through the thing that tried
 to pass

For truth and solid, not an empty lie:

“So, he not only forged the words for her
 20 “But words for me, made letters he called
 mine:

“What I sent, he retained, gave these in
 place,

“All by the mistress-messenger! As I
 “Recognised her, at potency of truth,
 “So she, by the crystalline soul, knew me,
 “Never mistook the signs. Enough of
 this —

“Let the wraith go to nothingness again,
 “Here is the orb, have only thought for
 her!”

“Thought?” nay, Sirs, what shall follow
 was not thought:

I have thought sometimes, and thought
 long and hard.

30 I have stood before, gone round a serious
 thing,

Tasked my whole mind to touch and clasp
 it close,

As I stretch forth my arm to touch this bar.
 God and man, and what duty I owe both, —
 I dare to say I have confronted these
 In thought: but no such faculty helped
 here.

I put forth no thought, — powerless, all
 that night

I paced the city: it was the first Spring.
 By the invasion I lay passive to,
 In rushed new things, the old were rapt
 away;

40 Alike abolished — the imprisonment
 Of the outside air, the inside weight o' the
 world

That pulled me down. Death meant, to
 spurn the ground,

Soar to the sky, — die well and you do that.
 The very immolation made the bliss;
 Death was the heart of life, and all the
 harm

My folly had crouched to avoid, now
 proved a veil

Hiding all gain my wisdom strove to grasp:
 As if the intense centre of the flame
 Should turn a heaven to that devoted fly
 Which hitherto, sophist alike and sage, 54
 Saint Thomas¹ with his sober grey goose-
 quill,

And sinner Plato by Cephisian reed,²
 Would fain, pretending just the insect's
 good,

Whisk off, drive back, consign to shade
 again.

Into another state, under new rule
 I knew myself was passing swift and sure;
 Whereof the initiatory pang approached,
 Felicitous annoy, as bitter-sweet

As when the virgin-band, the victors chaste
 Feel at the end the earthly garments 60
 drop,

And rise with something of a rosy shame
 Into immortal nakedness: so I

Lay, and let come the proper throe would
 thrill

Into the ecstasy and outthrob pain.

I' the grey of dawn it was I found myself
 Facing the pillared front o' the Pieve —
 mine,

My church: it seemed to say for the first
 time

“But am not I the Bride, the mystic love
 “O' the Lamb, who took thy plighted
 troth, my priest,

“To fold thy warm heart on my heart of 70
 stone

“And freeze thee nor unfasten any more?

“This is a fleshly woman, — let the free
 “Bestow their life-blood, thou art pulse-
 less now!”

See! Day by day I had risen and left
 this church

At the signal waved me by some foolish
 fan,

With half a curse and half a pitying smile
 For the monk I stumbled over in my haste,
 Prostrate and corpse-like at the altar-foot
 Intent on his *corona*: then the church
 Was ready with her quip, if word conduced, 80
 To quicken my pace nor stop for prating —

“There!

“Be thankful you are no such ninny, go
 “Rather to teach a black-eyed novice cards

¹ Saint Thomas: Aquinas. See note on p. 758,
 l. 70.

² Cephisian reed: the reeds of Cephisus, one
 of the rivers of Athens.

"Than gabble Latin and protrude that
nose

"Smoothed to a sheep's through no brains
and much faith!"

That sort of incentive! Now the church
changed tone —

Now, when I found out first that life and
death

Are means to an end, that passion uses
both,

Indisputably mistress of the man

Whose form of worship is self-sacrifice:

Now, from the stone lungs sighed the
scranell voice

"Leave that live passion, come be dead
with me!"

10 As if, i' the fabled garden,¹ I had gone
On great adventure, plucked in ignorance

Hedge-fruit, and feasted to satiety,

Laughing at such high fame for hips and
haws,

And scorned the achievement: then come
all at once

O' the prize o' the place, the thing of per-
fect gold,

The apple's self: and, scarce my eye on
that,

Was 'ware as well o' the seven-fold dragon's
watch.

Sirs, I obeyed. Obedience was too
strange, —

This new thing that had been struck into
me

20 By the look o' the lady, — to dare disobey
The first authoritative word. 'Twas God's.

I had been lifted to the level of her,
Could take such sounds into my sense. I

said

"We two are cognisant o' the Master now;

"She it is bids me bow the head: how true,

"I am a priest! I see the function here;

"I thought the other way self-sacrifice:

"This is the true, seals up the perfect sun.

"I pay it, sit down, silently obey."

30 So, I went home. Dawn broke, noon
broadened, I —

I sat stone-still, let time run over me.

The sun slanted into my room, had reached

The west. I opened book, — Aquinas

blazed

With one black name only on the white
page.

I looked up, saw the sunset: vespers rang:

"She counts the minutes till I keep my
word

"And come say all is ready. I am a priest.

"Duty to God is duty to her: I think

"God, who created her, will save her too

¹ The fabled garden: of the Hesperides,
where the golden apple was guarded by a dragon.

"Some new way, by one miracle the more, 40

"Without me. Then, prayer may avail
perhaps."

I went to my own place i' the Pieve, read

The office: I was back at home again

Sitting i' the dark. "Could she but know

— but know

"That, were there good in this distinct
from God's,

"Really good as it reached her, though
procured

"By a sin of mine, — I should sin: God
forgives.

"She knows it is no fear withholds me:
fear?

"Of what? Suspense here is the terrible
thing.

"If she should, as she counts the minutes, 50
come

"On the fantastic notion that I fear

"The world now, fear the Archbishop, fear
perhaps

"Count Guido, he who, having forged the
lies,

"May wait the work, attend the effect, —
I fear

"The sword of Guido! Let God see to
that —

"Hating lies, let not her believe a lie!"

Again the morning found me. "I will
work,

"Tie down my foolish thoughts. Thank
God so far!

"I have saved her from a scandal, stopped
the tongues

"Had broken else into a cackle and hiss 60

"Around the noble name. Duty is still

"Wisdom: I have been wise." So the
day wore.

At evening — "But, achieving victory,

"I must not blink the priest's peculiar
part,

"Nor shrink to counsel, comfort: priest
and friend —

"How do we discontinue to be friends?

"I will go minister, advise her seek

"Help at the source, — above all, not de-
spair:

"There may be other happier help at hand.

"I hope it, — wherefore then neglect to 70
say?"

There she stood — leaned there, for the
second time,

Over the terrace, looked at me, then spoke:

"Why is it you have suffered me to stay

"Breaking my heart two days more than
was need?

"Why delay help, your own heart yearns to
give?

"You are again here, in the self-same mind

"I see here, steadfast in the face of you, —
 "You grudge to do no one thing that I ask.
 "Why then is nothing done? You know my need.
 "Still, through God's pity on me, there is time
 "And one day more: shall I be saved or no?"
 I answered — "Lady, waste no thought, no word
 "Even to forgive me! Care for what I care —
 "Only! Now follow me as I were fate!
 "Leave this house in the dark to-morrow night,
 10 "Just before daybreak: — there's new moon this eve —
 "It sets, and then begins the solid black.
 "Descend, proceed to the Torrione, step
 "Over the low dilapidated wall,
 "Take San Clemente, there's no other gate
 "Unguarded at the hour: some paces thence
 "An inn stands; cross to it; I shall be there."

She answered, "If I can but find the way.
 "But I shall find it. Go now!"

I did go,
 Took rapidly the route myself prescribed,
 20 Stopped at Torrione, climbed the ruined place,
 Proved that the gate was practicable, reached
 The inn, no eye, despite the dark, could miss,
 Knocked there and entered, made the host secure:
 "With Caponsacchi it is ask and have;
 "I know my betters. Are you bound for Rome?
 "I get swift horse and trusty man," said he.

Then I retraced my steps, was found once more
 In my own house for the last time: there lay
 The broad pale opened Summa. "Shut his book,
 30 "There's other showing! 'Twas a Thomas too
 "Obtained, — more favoured than his namesake here, —
 "A gift, tied faith fast, foiled the tug of doubt, —
 "Our Lady's girdle; down he saw it drop
 "As she ascended into heaven, they say:
 "He kept that safe and bade all doubt adieu.
 "I too have seen a lady and hold a grace."

I know not how the night passed: morning broke;
 Presently came my servant. "Sir, this eve —
 "Do you forget?" I started. "How forget?
 "What is it you know?" "With due sub- 40 mission, Sir,
 "This being last Monday in the month but one
 "And a vigil, since to-morrow is Saint George,
 "And feast day, and moreover day for copes,
 "And Canon Conti now away a month,
 "And Canon Crispi sour because, forsooth,
 "You let him sulk in stall and bear the brunt
 "Of the octave . . . Well, Sir, 'tis important!"
 "True!"
 "Hearken, I have to start for Rome this night.
 "No word, lest Crispi overboil and burst!
 "Provide me with a laic dress. Throw 50 dust
 "I' the Canon's eye, stop his tongue's scandal so!
 "See there's a sword in case of accident."
 I knew the knave, the knave knew me.

And thus
 Through each familiar hindrance of the day
 Did I make steadily for its hour and end, —
 Felt time's old barrier-growth of right and fit
 Give way through all its twines, and let me go.
 Use and wont recognised the excepted man,
 Let speed the special service, — and I sped
 Till, at the dead between midnight and 60 morn,
 There was I at the goal, before the gate,
 With a tune in the ears, low leading up to loud,
 A light in the eyes, faint that would soon be flare,
 Ever some spiritual witness new and new
 In faster frequency, crowding solitude
 To watch the way o' the warfare, — till, at last,
 When the ecstatic minute must bring birth
 Began a whiteness in the distance, waxed
 Whiter and whiter, near grew and more near,
 Till it was she: there did Pompilia come: 70
 The white I saw shine through her was her soul's,
 Certainly, for the body was one black.
 Black from head down to foot. She did not speak.

Glided into the carriage, — so a cloud
Gathers the moon up. "By San Spirito,
"To Rome, as if the road burned under-
neath!

"Reach Rome, then hold my head in
pledge, I pay

"The run and the risk to heart's content!"
Just that

I said, — then, in another tick of time,
Sprang, was beside her, she and I alone.

So it began, our flight thro' dusk to clear,
Through day and night and day again to
night

10 Once more, and to last dreadful dawn of
all.

Sirs, how should I lie quiet in my grave
Unless you suffer me wring, drop by
drop,

My brain dry, make a riddance of the
drench

Of minutes with a memory in each,
Recorded motion, breath or look of hers,
Which poured forth would present you
one pure glass,

Mirror you plain, — as God's sea, glassed
in gold,

His saints, — the perfect soul Pompilia?
Men,

You must know that a man gets drunk with
truth

20 Stagnant inside him! Oh, they've killed
her, Sirs!

Can I be calm?

Calmly! Each incident

Proves, I maintain, that action of the flight
For the true thing it was. The first faint
scratch

O' the stone will test its nature, teach its
worth

To idiots who name Parian — coprolite.
After all, I shall give no glare — at best

Only display you certain scattered lights
Lamping the rush and roll of the abyss:
Nothing but here and there a fire-point
pricks

30 Wavelet from wavelet: well!

For the first hour
We both were silent in the night, I know:
Sometimes I did not see nor understand.
Blackness engulfed me, — partial stu-
por, say —

Then I would break way, breathe through
the surprise,

And be aware again, and see who sat
In the dark vest with the white face and
hands.

I said to myself — "I have caught it, I
conceive

"The mind o' the mystery: 'tis the way
they wake

"And wait, two martyrs somewhere in a
tomb

40 "Each by each as their blessing was to die;

"Some signal they are promised and ex-
pect, —

"When to arise before the trumpet scares:

"So, through the whole course of the
world they wait

"The last day, but so fearless and so safe!

"No otherwise, in safety and not fear,

"I lie, because she lies too by my side."

You know this is not love, Sirs, — it is
faith,

The feeling that there's God, he reigns and
rules

Out of this low world: that is all; no
harm!

At times she drew a soft sigh — music 50
seemed

Always to hover just above her lips,
Not settle, — break a silence music too.

In the determined morning, I first found
Her head erect, her face turned full to
me,

Her soul intent on mine through two wide
eyes.

I answered them. "You are saved hither-
to.

"We have passed Perugia, — gone round
by the wood,

"Not through, I seem to think, — and op-
posite

"I know Assisi; this is holy ground."

Then she resumed. "How long since we 60
both left

"Arezzo?" "Years — and certain hours
beside."

It was at . . . ah, but I forget the names!
'Tis a mere post-house and a hovel or
two;

I left the carriage and got bread and wine
And brought it her. "Does it detain to
eat?"

"They stay perforce, change horses, —
therefore eat!

"We lose no minute: we arrive, be sure!"
This was — I know not where — there's

a great hill

Close over, and the stream has lost its
bridge,

One fords it. She began — "I have 70
heard say

"Of some sick body that my mother knew,
"Twas no good sign when in a limb dis-
cased

"All the pain suddenly departs, — as if

"The guardian angel discontinued pain

"Because the hope of cure was gone at
last:

"The limb will not again exert itself,

"It needs be pained no longer: so with me,
"— My soul whence all the pain is past at
once:

"All pain must be to work some good in
the end.

"True, this I feel now, this may be that good,
 "Pain was because of, — otherwise, I fear!"

She said, — a long while later in the day,

When I had let the silence be, — abrupt —
 "Have you a mother?" "She died, I was born."

"A sister then?" "No sister." "Who was it —"

"What woman were you used to serve this way,

"Be kind to, till I called you and you came?"

I did not like that word. Soon afterward —

to "Tell me, are men unhappy, in some kind
 "Of mere unhappiness at being men,

"As women suffer, being womanish?"

"Have you, now, some unhappiness, I mean,

"Born of what may be man's strength overmuch,

"To match the undue susceptibility,

"The sense at every pore when hate is close?"

"It hurts us if a baby hides its face

"Or child strikes at us punily, calls names

"Or makes a mouth, — much more if stranger men

so "Laugh or frown, — just as that were much to bear!

"Yet rocks split, — and the blow-ball does no more,

"Quivers to feathery nothing at a touch;

"And strength may have its drawback weakness 'scapes."

Once she asked "What is it that made you smile,

"At the great gate with the eagles and the snakes,

"Where the company entered, 'tis a long time since?"

" — Forgive — I think you would not understand:

"Ah, but you ask me, — therefore it was this.

"That was a certain bishop's villa-gate,

30 "I knew it by the eagles, — and at once
 "Remembered this same bishop was just he

"People of old were wont to bid me please

"If I would catch preferment: so, I smiled

"Because an impulse came to me, a whim —

"What if I prayed the prelate leave to speak,

"Began upon him in his presence-hall

" — 'What, still at work so grey and obsolete?

"Still roched and mitred more or less?"

"Don't you feel all that out of fashion now?"

"I find out when the day of things is done!"

At eve we heard the *angelus*: she turned —

"I told you I can neither read nor write.

"My life stopped with the play-time; I will learn,

"If I begin to live again: but you —

"Who are a priest — wherefore do you not read

"The service at this hour? Read Gabriel's song,

"The lesson, and then read the little prayer

"To Raphael, proper for us travellers!"

I did not like that, neither, but I read.

When we stopped at Foligno it was dark. 50
 The people of the post came out with lights:

The driver said, "This time to-morrow, may

"Saints only help, relays continue good,

"Nor robbers hinder, we arrive at Rome."

I urged, "Why tax your strength a second night?"

"Trust me, alight here and take brief repose!

"We are out of harm's reach, past pursuit: go sleep

"If but an hour! I keep watch, guard the while

"Here in the doorway." But her whole face changed,

1 he misery grew again about her mouth, 60
 The eyes burned up from faintness, like the fawn's

Tired to death in the thicket, when she feels

The probing spear o' the huntsman. "Oh, no stay!"

She cried, in the fawn's cry, "On to Rome, on, on —

"Unless 'tis you who fear, — which cannot be!"

We did go on all night; but at its close

She was troubled, restless, moaned low, talked at whites

To herself, her brow on quiver with the dream:

Once, wide awake, she menaced, at arms' length

Waved away something — "Never again 70
 with you!

"My soul is mine, my body is my soul's:

"You and I are divided ever more

"In soul and body: get you gone!" Then I —

"Why, in my whole life I have never prayed!

"Oh, if the God, that only can, would help!
 "Am I his priest with power to cast out fiends?
 "Let God arise and all his enemies
 "Be scattered!" By morn, there was peace, no sigh
 Out of the deep sleep.

When she woke at last,
 I answered the first look — "Scarce twelve hours more,
 "Then, Rome! There probably was no pursuit,
 "There cannot now be peril: bear up brave!
 "Just some twelve hours to press through to the prize:
 "Then, no more of the terrible journey!"
 "Then,
 "No more o' the journey: if it might but last!
 "Always, my life-long, thus to journey still!
 "It is the interruption that I dread, —
 "With no dread, ever to be here and thus!
 "Never to see a face nor hear a voice!
 "Yours is no voice; you speak when you are dumb;
 "Nor face, I see it in the dark. I want
 "No face nor voice that change and grow unkind."
 That I liked, that was the best thing she said.

In the broad day, I dared entreat, "Descend!"
 I told a woman, at the garden-gate
 By the post-house, white and pleasant in the sun,
 "It is my sister, — talk with her apart!
 "She is married and unhappy, you perceive;
 "I take her home because her head is hurt;
 "Comfort her as you women understand!"
 So, there I left them by the garden-wall,
 Paced the road, then bade put the horses to,
 Came back, and there she sat: close to her knee,
 A black-eyed child still held the bowl of milk,
 Wondered to see how little she could drink,
 And in her arms the woman's infant lay.
 She smiled at me, "How much good this has done!
 "This is a whole night's rest and how much more!
 "I can proceed now, though I wish to stay.
 "How do you call that tree with the thick top
 "That holds in all its leafy green and gold

"The sun now like an immense egg of fire?"
 (It was a million-leaved mimosa.) "Take
 "The babe away from me and let me go!" 41
 And in the carriage, "Still a day, my friend!
 "And perhaps half a night, the woman fears.
 "I pray it finish since it cannot last:
 "There may be more misfortune at the close,
 "And where will you be? God suffice me then!"
 And presently — for there was a roadside-shrine —
 "When I was taken first to my own church
 "Lorenzo in Lucina, being a girl,
 "And bid confess my faults, I interposed
 "But teach me what fault to confess and 50 know!"
 "So, the priest said — 'You should be-think yourself:
 "Each human being needs must have done wrong!"
 "Now, be you candid and no priest but friend
 "Were I surprised and killed here on the spot,
 "A runaway from husband and his home,
 "Do you account it were in sin I died?
 "My husband used to seem to harm me, not . . .
 "Not on pretence he punished sin of mine,
 "Nor for sin's sake and lust of cruelty,
 "But as I heard him bid a farming-man 60
 "At the villa take a lamb once to the wood
 "And there ill-treat it, meaning that the wolf
 "Should hear its cries, and so come, quick be caught,
 "Enticed to the trap: he practised thus with me
 "That so, whatever were his gain thereby,
 "Others than I might become prey and spoil.
 "Had it been only between our two selves, —
 "His pleasure and my pain, — why, pleasure him
 "By dying, nor such need to make a coil!
 "But this was worth an effort, that my 70 pain
 "Should not become a snare, prove pain threefold
 "To other people — strangers — or unborn —
 "How should I know? I sought release from that —
 "I think, or else from, — dare I say, some cause
 "Such as is put into a tree, which turns
 "Away from the north wind with what nest it holds, —

"The woman said that trees so turn: now, friend,
 "Tell me, because I cannot trust myself!
 "You are a man: what have I done amiss?"
 You must conceive my answer, — I forget —
 Taken up wholly with the thought, perhaps,
 This time she might have said, — might, did not say —
 "You are a priest." She said, "my friend."

Day wore,

We passed the places, somehow the calm went,
 Again the restless eyes began to rove
 10 In new fear of the foe mine could not see.
 She wandered in her mind, — addressed me once
 "Gaetano!"¹ — that is not my name: whose name?
 I grew alarmed, my head seemed turning too.
 I quickened pace with promise now, now threat:
 Bade drive and drive, nor any stopping more.
 "Too deep i' the thick of the struggle, struggle through!
 "Then drench her in repose though death's self pour
 "The plenitude of quiet, — help us, God,
 "Whom the winds carry!"

Suddenly I saw

20 The old tower, and the little white-walled clump
 Of buildings and the cypress-tree or two, —
 "Already Castelnuovo — Rome!" I cried,
 "As good as Rome, — Rome is the next stage, think!
 "This is where travellers' hearts are wont to beat.
 "Say you are saved, sweet lady!" Up she woke.
 The sky was fierce with colour from the sun setting. She screamed out "No, I must not die!
 "Take me no farther, I should die: stay here!

"I have more life to save than mine!"

She swooned.

30 We seemed safe: what was it foreboded so?
 Out of the coach into the inn I bore
 The motionless and breathless pure and pale
 Pompilia, — bore her through a pitying group
 And laid her on a couch, still calm and cured
 By deep sleep of all woes at once. The host

Was urgent "Let her stay an hour or two!

"Leave her to us, all will be right by morn!"

Oh, my foreboding! But I could not choose.

I paced the passage, kept watch all night long.

I listened, — not one movement, not one sigh.

"Fear not: she sleeps so sound!" they said: but I

Feared, all the same, kept fearing more and more,

Found myself throb with fear from head to foot,

Filled with a sense of such impending woe,

That, at first pause of night, pretence of grey,

I made my mind up it was morn. — "Reach Rome,

"Lest hell reach her! A dozen miles to make,

"Another long breath, and we emerge!" I stood

I' the court-yard, roused the sleepy grooms. "Have out

"Carriage and horse, give haste, take gold!" said I.

While they made ready in the doubtful morn, —

'Twas the last minute, — needs must I ascend

And break her sleep; I turned to go.

And there

Faced me Count Guido, there posed the mean man

As master, — took the field, encamped his rights,

Challenged the world: there leered new triumph, there

Scowled the old malice in the visage bad

And black o' the scamp. Soon triumph supplied the tongue

A little, malice glued to his dry throat, And he part howled, part hissed . . . oh, 6

how he kept Well out o' the way, at arm's length and to spare! —

"My salutation to your priestship! What?

"Matutinal, busy with book so soon

"Of an April day that's damp as tears that now

"Deluge Arezzo at its darling's flight? — "Tis unfair, wrongs femininity at large,

"To let a single dame monopolise "A heart the whole sex claims, should share alike:

"Therefore I overtake you, Canon! Come! "The lady, — could you leave her side so soon?

¹ Gaetano: see Book VII. p. 780, ll. 40-45.

'You have not yet experienced at her hands
 'My treatment, you lay down undrugged, I see!
 'Hence this alertness — hence no death-in-life
 'Like what held arms fast when she stole from mine.
 'To be sure, you took the solace and repose
 'That first night at Foligno! — news abound
 'O' the road by this time, — men regaled me much,
 'As past them I came halting after you,
 'Vulcan pursuing Mars, as poets sing, —
 'Still at the last here pant I, but arrive,
 'Vulcan — and not without my Cyclops too,
 'The Commissary and the unpoisoned arm
 'O' the Civil Force, should Mars turn mutineer.
 'Enough of fooling: capture the culprits, friend!
 'Here is the lover in the smart disguise
 'With the sword, — he is a priest, so mine lies still.
 'There upstairs hides my wife the run-away,
 'His leman: the two plotted, poisoned first,
 'Plundered me after, and eloped thus far
 'Where now you find them. Do your duty quick!
 'Arrest and hold him! That's done: now catch her!' —
 During this speech of that man, — well, I stood
 Away, as he managed, — still, I stood as near
 The throat of him, — with these two hands, my own, —
 As now I stand near yours, Sir, — one quick spring,
 One great good satisfying gripe, and lo!
 There had he lain abolished with his lie,
 Creation purged o' the miscreate, man re-deemed,
 A spittle wiped off from the face of God!
 I, in some measure, seek a poor excuse
 For what I left undone, in just this fact
 That my first feeling at the speech I quote
 Was — not of what a blasphemy was dared,
 Not what a bag of venom'd purulence
 Was split and noisome, — but how splendidly
 Mirthful, how ludicrous a lie was launched!
 Would Molière's self wish more than hear such man
 Call, claim such woman for his own, his wife,
 Even though, in due amazement at the boast,
 He had stammered, she moreover was ⁴⁰ divine?
 She to be his, — were hardly less absurd
 Than that he took her name into his mouth,
 Licked, and then let it go again, the beast,
 Signed with his slaver. Oh, she poisoned him,
 Plundered him, and the rest! Well, what I wished
 Was, that he would but go on, say once more
 So to the world, and get his meed of men,
 The fist's reply to the filth. And while I mused,
 The minute, oh the misery, was gone!
 On either idle hand of me there stood ⁵⁰
 Really an officer, nor laughed i' the least:
 Nay, rendered justice to his reason, laid
 Logic to heart, as 'twere submitted them
 "Twice two makes four."
 "And now, catch her!" he cried.
 That sobered me. "Let myself lead the way —
 "Ere you arrest me, who am somebody,
 "Being, as you hear, a priest and privileged, —
 "To the lady's chamber! I presume you — men
 "Expert, instructed how to find out truth,
 "Familiar with the guise of guilt. Detect ⁶⁰
 "Guilt on her face when it meets mine, then judge
 "Between us and the mad dog howling there!"
 Up we all went together, in they broke
 O' the chamber late my chapel. There she lay,
 Composed as when I laid her, that last eve,
 O' the couch, still breathless, motionless, sleep's self,
 Wax-white, seraphic, saturate with the sun
 O' the morning that now flooded from the front
 And filled the window with a light like blood.
 "Behold the poisoner, the adulteress, ⁷⁰
 "— And feigning sleep too! Seize, bind!"
 Guido hissed.
 She started up, stood erect, face to face
 With the husband: back he fell, was but-tressed there
 By the window all a flame with morning-red,
 He the black figure, the opprobrious blur
 Against all peace and joy and light and life.
 "Away from between me and hell!" she cried:
 "Hell for me, no embracing any more!
 "I am God's, I love God, God — whose knees I clasp,

- "Whose utterly most just award I take,
 "But bear no more love-making devils:
 hence!"
 I may have made an effort to reach her
 side
 From where I stood i' the door-way, —
 anyhow
 I found the arms, I wanted, pinioned fast,
 Was powerless in the clutch to left and
 right
 O' the rabble pouring in, rascality
 Enlisted, rampant on the side of hearth
 Home and the husband, — pay in pros-
 pect too!
- 20 They heaped themselves upon me. "Ha!
 — and him
 "Also you outrage? Him, too, my sole
 friend,
 "Guardian and saviour? That I baulk
 you of,
 "Since — see how God can help at last
 and worst!"
 She sprang at the sword that hung beside
 him, seized,
 Drew, brandished it, the sunrise burned
 for joy
 O' the blade, "Die," cried she, "devil, in
 God's name!"
 Ah, but they all closed round her, twelve
 to one
 — The unmanly men, no woman-mother
 made,
 Spawned somehow! Dead-white and dis-
 armed she lay.
- 30 No matter for the sword, her word sufficed
 To spike the coward through and through:
 he shook,
 Could no longer spit between the teeth — "You
 see?"
 "You hear? Bear witness, then! Write
 down . . . but no —
 "Carry these criminals to the prison-house,
 "For first thing! I begin my search mean-
 while
 "After the stolen effects, gold, jewels,
 plate,
 "Money and clothes, they robbed me of
 and fled,
 "With no few amorous pieces, verse and
 prose,
 "I have much reason to expect to find."
- 30 When I saw that — no more than the first
 mad speech,
 Made out the speaker mad and a laughing-
 stock,
 So neither did this next device explode
 One listener's indignation, — that a scribe
 Did sit down, set himself to write indeed,
 While sundry knaves began to peer and
 pry
 In corner and hole, — that Guido, wiping
 brow
 And getting him a countenance, was fast
- Losing his fear, beginning to strut free
 O' the stage of his exploit, snuff here,
 sniff there, —
 Then I took truth in, guessed sufficiently
 The service for the moment. "What I
 say,
 "Slight at your peril! We are aliens here,
 "My adversary and I, called noble both;
 "I am the nobler, and a name men
 know.
 "I could refer our cause to our own Court
 "In our own country, but prefer appeal
 "To the nearer jurisdiction. Being a
 priest,
 "Though in a secular garb, — for reasons
 good
 "I shall adduce in due time to my peers, —
 "I demand that the Church I serve, de-
 cide
 "Between us, right the slandered lady
 there.
 "A Tuscan noble, I might claim the Duke:
 "A priest, I rather choose the Church, —
 bid Rome
 "Cover the wronged with her inviolate
 shield."
- There was no refusing this: they bore me
 off,
 They bore her off, to separate cells o' the
 same
 Ignoble prison, and, separate, thence to
 Rome.
 Pompilia's face, then and thus, looked on
 me
 The last time in this life: not one sight
 since,
 Never another sight to be! And yet
 I thought I had saved her. I appealed
 to Rome:
 It seems I simply sent her to her death.
 You tell me she is dying now, or dead;
 I cannot bring myself to quite believe
 This is a place you torture people in:
 What if this your intelligence were just
 A subtlety, an honest wile to work
 On a man at unawares? 'Twere worthy
 you.
 No, Sirs, I cannot have the lady dead!
 That erect form, flashing brow, fulgorant
 eye,
 That voice immortal (oh, that voice of
 hers!)
 That vision in the blood-red day-break —
 that
 Leap to life of the pale electric sword
 Angels go armed with, — that was not the
 last
 O' the lady! Come, I see through it, you
 find —
 Know the manœuvre! Also herself said
 I had saved her: do you dare say she spoke
 false?
 Let me see for myself if it be so!

Though she were dying, a Priest might be
of use,
The more when he's a friend too, — she
called me
Far beyond "friend." Come, let me see
her — indeed
It is my duty, being a priest: I hope
I stand confessed, established, proved a
priest?
My punishment had motive that, a priest
I, in a laic garb, a mundane mode,
Did what were harmlessly done otherwise.
I never touched her with my finger-tip
Except to carry her to the couch, that eve;
Against my heart, beneath my head,
bowed low,
As we priests carry the paten: that is why
— To get leave and go see her of your
grace —
I have told you this whole story over again,
Do I deserve grace? For I might lock
lips,
Laugh at your jurisdiction: what have you
To do with me in the matter? I suppose
You hardly think I donned a bravo's dress
To have a hand in the new crime; on the
old,
Judgment's delivered, penalty imposed,
I was chained fast at Civita hand and
foot —
She had only you to trust to, you and Rome,
Rome and the Church, and no pept med-
dling priest
Two days ago, when Guido, with the right,
Hacked her to pieces. One might well be
wroth;
I have been patient, done my best to help:
I come from Civita and punishment
As friend of the Court — and for pure
friendship's sake
Have told my tale to the end, — nay, not
the end —
For, wait — I'll end — not leave you that
excuse!
When we were parted, — shall I go on
there?
I was presently brought to Rome — yes,
here I stood
Opposite yonder very crucifix —
And there sat you and you, Sirs, quite the
same.
I heard charge, and bore question, and
told tale
Noted down in the book there, — turn
and see
If, by one jot or tittle, I vary now!
P' the colour the tale takes, there's change
perhaps;
'Tis natural, since the sky is different,
Eclipse in the air now; still, the outline
stays.
I showed you how it came to be my part
To save the lady. Then your clerk pro-
duced

Papers, a pack of stupid and impure
Banalities called letters about love —
Love, indeed, — I could teach who styled
them so,
Better, I think, though priest and loveless
both!
"— How was it that a wife, young, inno-
cent,
"And stranger to your person, wrote this
page?" —
"— She wrote it when the Holy Father
wrote
"The bestiality that posts thro' Rome, 54
"Put in his mouth by Pasquin." "Nor
perhaps
"Did you return these answers, verse and
prose,
"Signed, sealed and sent the lady?
There's your hand!"
"— This precious piece of verse, I really
judge,
"Is meant to copy my own character,
"A clumsy mimic; and this other prose,
"Not so much even; both rank forgery:
"Verse, quotha? Bembo's² verse! When
Saint John wrote
"The tract '*De Tribus*,'³ I wrote this to
match."
"— How came it, then, the documents 60
were found
"At the inn on your departure?" — "I
opine,
"Because there were no documents to find
"In my presence, — you must hide before
you find.
"Who forged them hardly practised in my
view;
"Who found them waited till I turned my
back."
"— And what of the clandestine visits
paid,
"Nocturnal passage in and out the house
"With its lord absent? 'Tis alleged you
climbed . . ."
"— Flew on a broomstick to the man i'
the moon!
"Who witnessed or will testify this trash?" 70
"— The trusty servant, Margherita's self,
"Even she who brought you letters, you
confess,
"And, you confess, took letters in reply:
"Forget not we have knowledge of the
facts!"
"— Sirs, who have knowledge of the facts,
defray

¹ *Pasquin*: the name given to a statue in Rome (from Pasquino, a cobbler, whose shop opposite to it was a centre of gossip) on which anonymous squibs were posted.

² *Bembo*: secretary to Pope Leo X., and a well-known man of letters (1470-1547).

³ *De Tribus*: the tract "*De Tribus Impostoribus*" (Moses, Mahomet, and Christ), often referred to in the Middle Ages:

"The expenditure of wit I waste in vain,
 "Trying to find out just one fact of all!
 "She who brought letters from who could
 not write,

"And took back letters to who could not
 read, —

"Who was that messenger, of your
 charity?"

"— Well, so far favours you the circum-
 stance

"That this same messenger . . . how
 shall we say? . . .

"*Sub imputatione meretricis*

"*Laborat*,¹ — which makes accusation null:

10 "We waive this woman's: nought makes
 void the next.

"Borsi, called Venerino, he who drove,
 "O' the first night when you fled away, at
 length

"Deposes to your kissings in the coach,
 "— Frequent, frenetic . . ." "When de-
 posed he so?"

"After some weeks of sharp imprison-
 ment . . ."

"— Granted by friend the Governor, I
 engage —"

"— For his participation in your flight!
 "At length his obduracy melting made
 "The avowal mentioned . . ." "Was dis-
 missed forthwith

20 "To liberty, poor knave, for recompense.
 "Sirs, give what credit to the lie you
 can!

"For me, no word in my defence I speak,
 "And God shall argue for the lady!"

So

Did I stand question, and make answer,
 still

With the same result of smiling disbelief,
 Polite impossibility of faith

In such affected virtue in a priest;
 But a showing fair play, an indulgence,
 even,

To one no worse than others after all —

30 Who had not brought disgrace to the order,
 played

Discreetly, ruffled gown nor ripped the
 cloth

In a bungling game at romps: I have told
 you, Sirs —

If I pretended simply to be pure
 Honest and Christian in the case, — ab-
 surd!

As well go boast myself above the needs
 O' the human nature, careless how meat
 smells,

Wine tastes, — a saint above the smack!
 But once

Abate my crest, own flaws i' the flesh, agree
 To go with the herd, be hog no more nor
 less,

¹ *Sub imputatione meretricis laborat*: "labours
 under the imputation of unchastity."

Why, hogs in common herd have common
 rights:

I must not be unduly borne upon,
 Who just romanced a little, sowed wild
 oats,

But 'scaped without a scandal, flagrant
 fault.

My name helped to a mirthful circum-
 stance:

"Joseph" would do well to amend his
 plea:

Undoubtedly — some toying with the wife,
 But as for ruffian violence and rape,

Potiphar pressed too much on the other
 side!

The intrigue, the elopement, the disguise,
 — well charged!

The letters and verse looked hardly like
 the truth.

Your apprehension was — of guilt enough
 To be compatible with innocence,

So, punished best a little and not too much.
 Had I struck Guido Franceschini's face,
 You had counselled me withdraw for my
 own sake,

Baulk him of bravo-hiring. Friends came
 round,

Congratulated, "Nobody mistakes!
 "The pettiness o' the forfeiture defines

"The peccadillo: Guido gets his share:
 "His wife is free of husband and hook-nose,
 "The mouldy viands and the mother-in-
 law.

"To Civita with you and amuse the time,
 "Travesty us '*De Raptu Helenæ*'"

"A funny figure must the husband cut
 "When the wife makes him skip, — too
 ticklish, eh?"

"Do it in Latin, not the Vulgar, then!
 "Scazons² — we'll copy and send his Emi-
 nence.

"Mind — one iambus in the final foot!
 "He'll rectify it, be your friend for life!"

Oh, Sirs, depend on me for much new light
 Thrown on the justice and religion here
 By this proceeding, much fresh food for
 thought!

And I was just set down to study these
 In relegation, two short days ago,
 Admiring how you read the rules, when,
 clap,

A thunder comes into my solitude —
 I am caught up in a whirlwind and cast
 here,

Told of a sudden, in this room where so
 late

You dealt out law adroitly, that those
 scales,

I meekly bowed to, took my allotment
 from,

And I was just set down to study these
 In relegation, two short days ago,
 Admiring how you read the rules, when,
 clap,

A thunder comes into my solitude —
 I am caught up in a whirlwind and cast
 here,

Told of a sudden, in this room where so
 late

You dealt out law adroitly, that those
 scales,

I meekly bowed to, took my allotment
 from,

And I was just set down to study these
 In relegation, two short days ago,
 Admiring how you read the rules, when,
 clap,

A thunder comes into my solitude —
 I am caught up in a whirlwind and cast
 here,

Told of a sudden, in this room where so
 late

You dealt out law adroitly, that those
 scales,

I meekly bowed to, took my allotment
 from,

² *Scazons*: iambic verses, with a spondee in
 the final foot instead of an iambus.

Guido has snatched at, broken in your hands,
 Metes to himself the murder of his wife,
 Full measure, pressed down, running over now!
 Can I assist to an explanation? — Yes,
 I rise in your esteem, sagacious Sirs,
 Stand up a renderer of reasons, not
 The officious priest would personate Saint George
 For a mock Princess in undragoned days.
 What, the blood startles you? What, after all
 The priest who needs must carry sword on thigh
 May find imperative use for it? Then, there was
 A Princess, was a dragon belching flame,
 And should have been a Saint George also? Then,
 There might be worse schemes than to break the bonds
 At Arezzo, lead her by the little hand,
 Till she reached Rome, and let her try to live?
 But you were law and gospel, — would one please
 Stand back, allow your faculty elbow-room?
 You blind guides who must needs lead eyes that see!
 Fools, alike ignorant of man and God!
 What was there here should have perplexed your wit
 For a wink of the owl-eyes of you? How miss, then,
 What's now forced on you by this flare of fact —
 As if Saint Peter failed to recognise Nero as no apostle, John or James,
 Till someone burned a martyr, made a torch
 O' the blood and fat to show his features by!
 Could you fail read this cartulary aright
 On head and front of Franceschini there,
 Large-lettered like hell's masterpiece of print, —
 That he, from the beginning pricked at heart
 By some lust, letch of hate against his wife,
 Plotted to plague her into overt sin
 And shame, would slay Pompilia body and soul,
 And save his mean self — miserably caught
 I' the quagmire of his own tricks, cheats and lies?
 — That himself wrote those papers, — from himself
 To himself, — which, i' the name of me and her,
 His mistress-messenger gave her and me,
 Touching us with such pustules of the soul

That she and I might take the taint, be shown
 To the world and shuddered over, speckled so?
 — That the agent put her sense into my words,
 Made substitution of the thing she hoped,
 For the thing she had and held, its opposite,
 While the husband in the background bit his lips
 At each fresh failure of his precious plot?
 — That when at the last we did rush each on each,
 By no chance but because God willed it so —
 The spark of truth was struck from out our 54 souls —
 Made all of me, descried in the first glance,
 Seem fair and honest and permissible love
 O' the good and true — as the first glance told me
 There was no duty patent in the world
 Like daring try be good and true myself,
 Leaving the shows of things to the Lord of Show
 And Prince o' the Power of the Air. Our very flight,
 Even to its most ambiguous circumstance,
 Irrefragably proved how futile, false . . .
 Why, men — men and not boys — boys 60 and not babes —
 Babes and not beasts — beasts and not stocks and stones! —
 Had the liar's lie been true one pin-point speck,
 Were I the accepted suitor, free o' the place,
 Disposer of the time, to come at a call
 And go at a wink as who should say me nay, —
 What need of flight, what were the gain therefrom
 But just damnation, failure or success?
 Damnation pure and simple to her the wife
 And me the priest — who bartered private bliss
 For public reprobation, the safe shade 74
 For the sunshine which men see to pelt me by:
 What other advantage, — we who led the days
 And nights alone i' the house, — was flight to find?
 In our whole journey did we stop an hour,
 Diverge a foot from straight road till we reached
 Or would have reached — but for that fate of ours —
 The father and mother, in the eye of Rome,
 The eye of yourselves we made aware of us

At the first fall of misfortune? And indeed
You did so far give sanction to our flight,
Confirm its purpose, as lend helping hand,
Deliver up Pompilia not to him
She fled, but those the flight was ventured
for.

Why then could you, who stopped short,
not go on

One poor step more, and justify the means,
Having allowed the end? — not see and
say

“Here’s the exceptional conduct that
should claim

10 “To be exceptionally judged on rules

“Which, understood, make no exception
here” —

Why play instead into the devil’s hands
By dealing so ambiguously as gave
Guido the power to intervene like me,
Prove one exception more? I saved his
wife

Against law: against law he slays her now:
Deal with him!

I have done with being judged.
I stand here guiltless in thought, word and
deed,

To the point that I apprise you, — in con-
tempt

20 For all misapprehending ignorance

O’ the human heart, much more the mind
of Christ, —

That I assuredly did bow, was blessed
By the revelation of Pompilia. There!
Such is the final fact I fling you, Sirs,
To mouth and mumble and misinterpret:
there!

“The priest’s in love,” have it the vulgar
way!

Unpriest me, rend the rags o’ the vestment,
do —

Degrade deep, disenfranchise all you
dare —

Remove me from the midst, no longer
priest

30 And fit companion for the like of you —
Your gay Abati with the well-turned leg
And rose i’ the hat-rim, Canons, cross at
neck

And silk mask in the pocket of the gown.
Brisk Bishops with the world’s musk still
unbrushed

From the rochet; I’ll no more of these
good things:

There’s a crack somewhere, something
that’s unsound

I’ the rattle!

For Pompilia — be advised,
Build churches, go pray! You will find
me there,

I know, if you come, — and you will come,
I know.

Why, there’s a Judge weeping! Did not I
say

You were good and true at bottom? You
see the truth —

I am glad I helped you: she helped me
just so.

But for Count Guido, — you must counsel
there!

I bow my head, bend to the very dust,
Break myself up in shame of faultiness.

I had him one whole moment, as I said —
As I remember, as will never out

O’ the thoughts of me, — I had him in
arm’s reach

There, — as you stand, Sir, now you cease
to sit, —

I could have killed him ere he killed his
wife,

And did not: he went off alive and well
And then effected this last feat — through
me!

Me — not through you — dismiss that
fear! ’Twas you

Hindered me staying here to save her, —
not

From leaving you and going back to him
And doing service in Arezzo. Come,

Instruct me in procedure! I conceive —
In all due self-abasement might I speak —

How you will deal with Guido: oh, not
death!

Death, if it let her life be: otherwise
Not death, — your lights will teach you
clearer! I

Certainly have an instinct of my own
I’ the matter: bear with me and weigh its
worth!

Let us go away — leave Guido all alone
Back on the world again that knows him
now!

I think he will be found (indulge so far)!
Not to die so much as slide out of life,
Pushed by the general horror and common
hate

Low, lower, — left o’ the very ledge of
things,

I seem to see him catch convulsively
One by one at all honest forms of life,

At reason, order, decency and use —
To cramp him and get foothold by at least;

And still they disengage them from his
clutch.

“What, you are he, then, had Pompilia
once

“And so forwent her? Take not up with
us!”

And thus I see him slowly and surely
edged

Off all the table-land whence life upsprings
Aspiring to be immortality,

As the snake, hatched on hill-top by mis-
chance,

Despite his wriggling, slips, slides, slidders
 down
 Hill-side, lies low and prostrate on the
 smooth
 Level of the outer place, lapsed in the
 vale:
 So I lose Guido in the loneliness,
 Silence and dusk, till at the doleful end,
 At the horizontal line, creation's verge,
 From what just is to absolute nothing-
 ness —
 Whom is it, straining onward still, he
 meets?
 What other man deep further in the fate,
 Who, turning at the prize of a footfall
 To flatter him and promise fellowship,
 Discovers in the act a frightful face —
 Judas, made monstrous by much solitude!
 The two are at one now! Let them love
 their love
 That bites and claws like hate, or hate
 their hate
 That mops and mows and makes as it were
 love!
 There, let them each tear each in devil's-
 fun,
 Or fondle this the other while malice
 aches —
 Both teach, both learn detestability!
 Kiss him the kiss, Iscariot! Pay that
 back,
 That smatch o' the slaver blistering on
 your lip,
 By the better trick, the insult he spared
 Christ —
 Lure him the lure o' the letters, Aretine!
 Lick him o'er slimy-smooth with jelly-filth
 O' the verse-and-prose pollution in love's
 guise!
 The cockatrice is with the basilisk!
 There let them grapple, denizens o' the
 dark,
 Foes or friends, but indissolubly bound,
 In their one spot out of the ken of God
 Or care of man, for ever and ever more!

 Why, Sirs, what's this? Why, this is sorry
 and strange!
 Futility, divagation: this from me
 Bound to be rational, justify an act
 Of sober man! — whereas, being moved
 so much,
 I give you cause to doubt the lady's mind:
 A pretty sarcasm for the world! I fear
 You do her wit injustice, — all through
 me!
 Like my fate all through, — ineffective
 help!
 A poor rash advocate I prove myself.
 You might be angry with good cause: but
 sure
 At the advocate, — only at the undue
 zeal

That spoils the force of his own plea, I
 think?
 My part was just to tell you how things
 stand,
 State facts and not be flustered at their
 fume.
 But then 'tis a priest speaks: as for love, —
 no!
 If you let buzz a vulgar fly like that
 About your brains, as if I loved, forsooth,
 Indeed, Sirs, you do wrong! We had no
 thought
 Of such infatuation, she and I:
 There are many points that prove it: do 50
 be just!
 I told you, — at one little roadside-place
 I spent a good half-hour, paced to and fro
 The garden; just to leave her free awhile,
 I plucked a handful of Spring herb and
 bloom:
 I might have sat beside her on the bench
 Where the children were: I wish the thing
 had been,
 Indeed: the event could not be worse, you
 know:
 One more half-hour of her saved! She's
 dead now, Sirs!
 While I was running on at such a rate,
 Friends should have plucked me by the 60
 sleeve: I went
 Too much o' the trivial outside of her face
 And the purity that shone there — plain to
 me,
 Not to you, what more natural? Nor am I
 Infatuated, — oh, I saw, be sure!
 Her brow had not the right line, leaned too
 much,
 Painters would say; they like the straight-
 up Greek:
 This seemed bent somewhat with an
 invisible crown
 Of martyr and saint, not such as art
 approves.
 And how the dark orbs dwelt deep under-
 neath,
 Looked out of such a sad sweet heaven 70
 on me!
 The lips, compressed a little, came for-
 ward too,
 Careful for a whole world of sin and pain.
 That was the face, her husband nakes his
 plea,
 He sought just to disfigure, — no offence
 Beyond that! Sirs, let us be rational!
 He needs must vindicate his honour, — ay,
 Yet shirks, the coward, in a clown's dis-
 guise,
 Away from the scene, endeavours to
 escape.
 Now, had he done so, slain and left no
 trace
 O' the slayer, — what were vindicated, 80
 pray?

You had found his wife disfigured or a corpse,
 For what and by whom? It is too palpable!
 Then, here's another point involving law:
 I use this argument to show you meant
 No calumny against us by that title —
 O' the sentence, — liars try to twist it so:
 What penalty it bore, I had to pay
 Till further proof should follow of innocence —

Probationis ob defectum,¹ — proof?

10 How could you get proof without trying us?

You went through the preliminary form,
 Stopped there, contrived this sentence to amuse

The adversary. If the title ran
 For more than fault imputed and not proved,

That was a simple penman's error, else
 A slip i' the phrase, — as when we say of you

"Charged with injustice" — which may either be

Or not be, — 'tis a name that sticks meanwhile.

Another relevant matter: fool that I am!

20 Not what I wish true, yet a point friends urge:

It is not true, — yet, since friends think it helps, —

She only tried me when some others failed —

Began with Conti, whom I told you of,
 And Guillichini, Guido's kinsfolk both,
 And when abandoned by them, not before,
 Turned to me. That's conclusive why she turned.

Much good they got by the happy cowardice!

Conti is dead, poisoned a month ago:
 Does that much strike you as a sin? Not much,

30 After the present murder, — one mark more

On the Moor's skin, — what is black by blacker still?

Conti had come here and told truth. And so

With Guillichini; he's condemned of course

To the galleys, as a friend in this affair,
 Tried and condemned for no one thing i' the world,

A fortnight since by who but the Governor? —

The just judge, who refused Pompilia help

At first blush, being her husband's friend, you know.

¹ *Probationis ob defectum*: "for want of sufficient proof."

There are two tales to suit the separate courts,

Arezzo and Rome: he tells you here, we 40 fled

Alone, unhelpt, — lays stress on the main fault,

The spiritual sin, Rome looks to: but elsewhere

He likes best we should break in, steal, bear off,

Be fit to brand and pillory and flog — That's the charge goes to the heart of the Governor

If these unpriest me, you and I may yet converse, Vincenzo Marzi-Medici!

Oh, Sirs, there are worse men than you, I say!

More easily duped, I mean; this stupid lie, Its liar never dared propound in Rome, 50

He gets Arezzo to receive, — nay more, Gets Florence and the Duke to authorise!

This is their Rota's sentence, their Granduke

Signs and seals! Rome for me henceforward — Rome,

Where better men are, — most of all, that man

The Augustinian of the Hospital, Who writes the letter, — he confessed, he says,

Many a dying person, never one So sweet and true and pure and beautiful.

A good man! Will you make him Pope 60 one day?

Not that he is not good too, this we have — But old, — else he would have his word to speak,

His truth to teach the world: I thirst for truth,

But shall not drink it till I reach the source.

Sirs, I am quiet again. You see, we are So very pitiable, she and I,

Who had conceivably been otherwise. Forget distemperature and idle heat!

Apart from truth's sake, what's to move so much?

Pompilia will be presently with God; I am, on earth, as good as out of it,

A relegated priest; when exile ends, I mean to do my duty and live long.

She and I are mere strangers now: but priests

Should study passion; how else cure mankind,

Who come for help in passionate extremes? I do but play with an imagined life

Of who, unfettered by a vow, unblessed By the higher call, — since you will have it so, —

Leads it companioned by the woman there. 8 To live, and see her learn, and learn by her,

Out of the low obscure and petty world — Or only see one purpose and one will

Evolve themselves i' the world, change wrong to right:

To have to do with nothing but the true,
The good, the eternal — and these, not alone

In the main current of the general life,
But small experiences of every day,
Concerns of the particular hearth and home:

To learn not only by a comet's rush
But a rose's birth, — not by the grandeur,
God —

But the comfort, Christ. All this, how far away!

Mere delectation, meet for a minute's dream! —

Just as a drudging student trims his lamp,
Opens his Plutarch, puts him in the place
Of Roman, Grecian; draws the patched gown close,

Dreams, "Thus should I fight, save or rule the world!" —

Then smilingly, contentedly, awakes
To the old solitary nothingness.

So I, from such communion, pass content . . .

O great, just, good God! Miserable me!

VII. — POMPILIA.

[In this Book scarcely any explanatory notes are necessary. With dramatic appropriateness, the speech of Pompilia is expressed in language of exceptional simplicity and directness.]

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,

And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks;

'Tis writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucinia, all my names

At length, so many names for one poor child,

— Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela Pompilia Comparini, — laughable!

Also 'tis writ that I was married there ¹³
four years ago: and they will add, I hope,
When they insert my death, a word or two, —

Omitting all about the mode of death, —
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,

That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through

grace
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have;

Because the boy was born at, so baptized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church:
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like, — while this Lorenzo seems

My own particular place, I always say.
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
As the bed here, what the marble lion ⁴⁰
meant,

With half his body rushing from the wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man —
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life complete,

He is a boy and Gaetan by name —
Gaetano for a reason, — if the friar
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me
Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was ⁵⁰
Baptized me: he remembers my whole life
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things I know are true, — will you remember them?

Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,

To count my wounds, — twenty-two
dagger-wounds,

Five deadly, but I do not suffer much —
Or too much pain, — and am to die to-night.

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,

— Better than born, baptized and hid away

Before this happened, safe from being hurt! ⁶⁰
That had been sin God could not well forgive:

He was too young to smile and save himself.

When they took, two days after he was born,

My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find, —

The country-woman, used to nursing babes,

Said "Why take on so? where is the great loss?"

"These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,

"Only begin to smile at the month's end;
"He would not know you, if you kept him ⁷⁰
here,

"Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks

"Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
"And then I bring him back to be your

own,
"And both of you may steal to — we know where!"

The month — there wants of it two weeks this day!

Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she —

Come to say "Since he smiles before the time,

"Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?

'Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!"

Now I shall never see him; what is worse, When he grows up and gets to be my age, He will seem hardly more than a great boy; And if he asks "What was my mother like?"

"People may answer "Like girls of seventeen" —

And how can he but think of this and that, 10 Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush When he regards them as such boys may do?

Therefore I wish someone will please to say

I looked already old though I was young; Do I not . . . say, if you are by to speak . . .

Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,

Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,

Than the poor Virgin that I used to know At our street-corner in a lonely niche, — The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off, —

20 Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:

She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write!

Such could write what their son should read in time,

Had they a whole day to live out like me. Also my name is not a common name,

"Pompilia," and may help to keep apart A little the thing I am from what girls are.

But then how far away, how hard to find Will anything about me have become,

30 Even if the boy bethink himself and ask! No father that he ever knew at all,

Nor never had — no, never had, I say! That is the truth, — nor any mother left,

Out of the little two weeks that she lived, Fit for such memory as might assist:

As good too as no family, no name, Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,

Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems They must not be my parents any more.

40 That is why something put it in my head To call the boy "Gaetano" — no old name For sorrow's sake; I looked up to the sky

And took a new saint¹ to begin anew. One who has only been made saint —

how long?

Twenty-five years: so, carefuller, perhaps,

¹ A new saint: St. Gaetan or Cajetan, founder of the order of Theatins, who lived 1480-1547, and was canonised by Clement X. in 1671.

To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,

Tired out by this time, — see my own five saints!

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard The history of me as what someone dreamed,

And get to disbelieve it at the last: Since to myself it dwindles fast to that, Sheer dreaming and impossibility, Just in four days too! All the seventeen years,

Not once did a suspicion visit me How very different a lot is mine From any other woman's in the world.

The reason must be, 'twas by step and step It got to grow so terrible and strange.

These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,

Into my neighbourhood and privacy, 60 Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay

And I was found familiarised with fear, When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried

"Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus, "How comes that arm of yours about a

wolf?

"And the soft length, — lies in and out your feet

"And laps you round the knee, — a snake it is!"

And so on.

Well, and they are right enough, By the torch they hold up now: for first,

observe, I never had a father, — no, nor yet

A mother: my own boy can say at least "I had a mother whom I kept two weeks!"

Not I, who little used to doubt . . . I doubt

Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth? They loved me always as I love my babe

(— Nearly so, that is — quite so could not be —)

Did for me all I meant to do for him, Till one surprising day, three years ago,

They both declared, at Rome, before some judge

In some Court where the people flocked to 80 hear,

That really I had never been their child, Was a mere castaway, the careless crime

Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much

Of a woman known too well, — little to these,

Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood:

What then to Pietro and Violante, both No more my relatives than you or you?

Nothing to them! You know what they declared.

So with my husband, — just such a surprise,

Such a mistake, in that relationship! Everyone says that husbands love their wives,

Guard them and guide them, give them happiness;

'Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion: well, You see how much of this comes true in mine!

People indeed would fain have somehow proved

He was no husband: but he did not hear, Or would not wait, and so has killed us all. Then there is . . . only let me name one more!

There is the friend, — men will not ask about,

But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to, And think my lover, most surprise of all! Do only hear, it is the priest they mean, Giuseppe Caponsacchi: a priest — love, And love me! Well, yet people think he did.

I am married, he has taken priestly vows, They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,

"Yes, how he loves you!" "That was love" — they say,

When anything is answered that they ask: Or else "No wonder you love him" — they say.

They shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame —

As if we neither of us lacked excuse, And anyhow are punished to the full, And downright love atones for everything! Nay, I heard read out in the public Court Before the judge, in presence of my friends, Letters 'twas said the priest had sent to me, And other letters sent him by myself, We being lovers!

Listen what this is like!

When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that's

Violante, you must let me call her so Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word . . .

She brought a neighbour's child of my own age

To play with me of rainy afternoons; And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,

We two agreed to find each other out Among the figures. "Tisbe, that is you,

"With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,

"Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf "Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back:

"Call off your hound and leave the stag alone!"

"— And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves

"Flourishing out of your five finger-ends,

"And all the rest of you so brown and rough:

"Why is it you are turned a sort of tree?" You know the figures never were ourselves Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life, —

As well what was, as what, like this, was not, —

Looks old, fantastic and impossible: 54

I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades. — Even to my babe! I thought, when he was born,

Something began for once that would not end,

Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay For evermore, eternally quite mine.

Well, so he is, — but yet they bore him off,

The third day, lest my husband should lay traps

And catch him, and by means of him catch me.

Since they have saved him so, it was well done:

Yet thence comes such confusion of what 60 was

With what will be, — that late seems long ago,

And, what years should bring round, already come,

Till even he withdraws into a dream As the rest do: I fancy him grown great,

Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me,

Frowns with the others, "Poor imprudent child!

"Why did you venture out of the safe street?

"Why go so far from help to that lone house?

"Why open at the whisper and the knock?"

Six days ago when it was New Year's-day, 70

We bent above the fire and talked of him, What he should do when he was grown and great.

Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair

And fireside, — laughed, as I lay safe at last,

"Pompilia's march from bed to board is made,

"Pompilia back again and with a babe, "Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk!"

Then we all wished each other more New Years.

Pietro began to scheme — "Our cause is 84 gained;

"The law is stronger than a wicked man: "Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours!

"We will avoid the city, tempt no more "The greedy ones by feasting and parade, —

"Live at the other villa, we know where

"Still farther off, and we can watch the babe

"Grow fast in the good air; and wood is cheap

"And wine sincere outside the city gate.

"I still have two or three old friends will grope

"Their way along the mere half-mile of road,

"With staff and lantern on a moonless night

"When one needs talk: they'll find me, never fear,

"And I'll find them a flask of the old sort yet!"

Violante said "You chatter like a crow:

10 "Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall to bed:

"Do not too much the first day, — somewhat more

"To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape

"And hood and coat! I have spun wool enough."

Oh what a happy friendly eve was that!

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went —

He was so happy and would talk so much, Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth

Sight-seeing in the cold, — "So much to see

"I' the churches! Swathe your throat three times!" she cried,

20 "And, above all, beware the slippery ways,

"And bring us all the news by supper-time!"

He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,

Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,

Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the hearth,

And bade Violante treat us to a flask,

Because he had obeyed her faithfully,

Gone sight-seeing through the seven, and found no church

To his mind like San Giovanni — "There's the fold,

"And all the sheep together, big as cats!

30 "And such a shepherd, half the size of life,

"Starts up and hears the angel" — when, at the door,

A tap: we started up: you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know;

Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes

Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred —

Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise? —

In telling that first falsehood, buying me

From my poor faulty mother at a price,

To pass off upon Pietro as his child.

40 If one should take my babe, give him a

name,

Say he was not Gaetano and my own, But that some other woman made his mouth

And hands and feet, — how very false were that!

No good could come of that; and all harm did.

Yet if a stranger were to represent

"Needs must you either give your babe to me

"And let me call him mine for evermore,

"Or let your husband get him" — ah, my God,

That were a trial I refuse to face!

Well, just so here: it proved wrong but seemed right

To poor Violante — for there lay, she said,

My poor real dying mother in her rags,

Who put me from her with the life and all,

Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,

To die the easier by what price I fetched —

Also (I hope) because I should be spared

Sorrow and sin, — why may not that have helped?

My father, — he was no one, any one, —

The worse, the likelier, — call him — he who came,

Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way,

And left no trace to track by; there remained

Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,

To catch up or let fall, — and yet a thing

She could make happy, be made happy

with,

This poor Violante, — who would frown

thereat?

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.

It is not that because a bud is born

At a wild brier's end, full i' the wild beast's way,

We ought to pluck and put it out of reach

On the oak-tree top, — say "There the bud belongs!"

She thought, moreover, real lies were lies

told

For harm's sake; whereas this had good

at heart,

Good for my mother, good for me, and

good

For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,

And needed one to make his life of use,

Receive his house and land when he should die.

Wrong, wrong and always wrong! how

plainly wrong!

For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,

All the same at her heart: this falsehood

hatched,

She could not let it go nor keep it fast.

She told me so, — the first time I was found

Locked in her arms once more after the
 pain,
 When the nuns let me leave them and go
 home,
 And both of us cried all the cares away, —
 This it was set her on to make amends,
 This brought about the marriage — simply
 this!
 Do let me speak for her you blame so
 much!
 When Paul, my husband's brother, found
 me out,
 Heard there was wealth for who should
 marry me,
 So, came and made a speech to ask my
 hand
 For Guido, — she, instead of piercing
 straight
 Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
 Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
 Designate just the time for planting me
 (The wild-briar slip she plucked to love
 and wear)
 In soil where I could strike real root, and
 grow,
 And get to be the thing I called myself:
 For, wife and husband are one flesh, God
 says,
 And I, whose parents seemed such and
 were none,
 Should in a husband have a husband now,
 Find nothing, this time, but was what it
 seemed,
 — All truth and no confusion any more.
 I know she meant all good to me, all pain
 To herself, — since how could it be aught
 but pain
 To give me up, so, from her very breast,
 The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all
 those years,
 She had got used to feel for and find fixed?
 She meant well: has it been so ill i' the
 main?
 That is but fair to ask: one cannot judge
 Of what has been the ill or well of life,
 The day that one is dying, — sorrows
 change
 Into not altogether sorrow-like;
 I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
 Now it is over, and no danger more.
 My child is safe; there seems not so much
 pain.
 It comes, most like, that I am just ab-
 solved,
 Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed
 fair, —
 One cannot both have and not have, you
 know, —
 Being right now, I am happy and colour
 things.
 Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
 Softened and bettered: so with other
 sights:

To me at least was never evening yet
 But seemed far beautifuller than its day,
 For past is past.

There was a fancy came,
 When somewhere, in the journey with my
 friend,
 We stepped into a hovel to get food;
 And there began a yelp here, a bark
 there, —
 Misunderstanding creatures that were
 wroth
 And vexed themselves and us till we re-
 tired.
 The hovel is life: no matter what dogs bit
 Or cats scratched in the hovel I break 50
 from,
 All outside is lone field, moon and such
 peace —
 Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
 Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on
 the white,
 Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine de-
 clares,
 To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years
Were, each day, happy as the day was
long:

This may have made the change too
 terrible.

I know that when Violante told me first
 The cavalier — she meant to bring next 60
 morn,

Whom I must also let take, kiss my
 hand —

Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve
 And marry me, — which over, we should
 go

Home both of us without him as before,
 And, till she bade speak, I must hold my
 tongue,

Such being the correct way with girl-
 brides,

From whom one word would make a
 father blush, —

I know, I say, that when she told me this
 — Well, I no more saw sense in what she
 said

Than a lamb does in people clipping wool; 70
 Only lay down and let myself be clipped.

And when next day the cavalier who
 came —

(Tisbe had told me that the slim young
 man

With wings at head, and wings at feet, and
 sword

Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,
 Would eat a girl else, — was a cavalier)
 When he proved Guido Franceschini, —
 old

And nothing like so tall as I myself,
 Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,

Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist.
 He called an owl and used for catching
 birds, —
 And when he took my hand and made a
 smile —
 Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
 Seemed hardly more important in the case
 Than, — when one gives you, say, a coin
 to spend, —
 Its newness or its oldness; if the piece
 Weigh properly and buy you what you
 wish,
 No matter whether you get grimie or glare!
 10 Men take the coin, return you grapes and
 figs.
 Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece
 Would purchase me the praise of those I
 loved:
 About what else should I concern myself?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant,
 I supposed this or any man would serve,
 No whit the worse for being so uncouth:
 For I was ill once and a doctor came
 With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
 Black jerkin and black buckles and black
 sword,
 20 And white sharp beard over the ruff in
 front,
 And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere!
 Who felt my pulse, made me put out my
 tongue,
 Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two
 Of a black bitter something, — I was
 cured!
 What mattered the fierce beard or the grim
 face?
 It was the physic beautified the man,
 Master Malpichi, — never met his match
 In Rome, they said, — so ugly all the
 same!

However, I was hurried through a storm,
 30 Next dark eve of December's dearest
 day —
 How it rained! — through our street and
 the Lion's-mouth
 And the bit of Corso, — cloaked round,
 covered close,
 I was like something strange or contra-
 band, —
 Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
 My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
 I fancied we were come to see a corpse
 Before the altar which she pulled me
 toward.
 There we found waiting an unpleasant
 priest
 Who proved the brother, not our parish
 friend,
 40 But one with mischief-making mouth and
 eye,

Paul, whom I know since to my cost
 And then
 I heard the heavy-church-door lock out
 help
 Behind us: for the customary warmth,
 Two tapers shivered on the altar.
 "Quick —
 "Lose no time!" cried the priest. And
 straightway down
 From . . . what's behind the altar where
 he hid —
 Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and
 all,
 Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there
 was I
 O' the chancel, and the priest had opened
 book,
 Read here and there, made me say that 5
 and this,
 And after, told me I was now a wife,
 Honoured indeed, since Christ thus weds
 the Church,
 And therefore turned he water into wine,
 To show I should obey my spouse like
 Christ.
 Then the two slipped aside and talked
 apart,
 And I, silent and scared, got down again
 And joined my mother who was weeping
 now.
 Nobody seemed to mind us any more,
 And both of us on tiptoe found our way
 To the door which was unlocked by this, 6
 and wide.
 When we were in the street, the rain had
 stopped,
 All things looked better. At our own house-
 door,
 Violante whispered "No one syllable
 "To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a
 word!"
 "— Well treated to a wetting, draggle-
 tails!"
 Laughed Pietro as he opened — "Very
 near
 "You made me brave the gutter's roaring
 sea
 "To carry off from roost old dove and
 young,
 "Trussed up in church, the cote, by me,
 the kite!
 "What do these priests mean, praying folk 7
 to death
 "On stormy afternoons, with Christmas
 close
 "To wash our sins off nor require the
 rain?"
 Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,
 Madonna saved me from immodest speech,
 I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.
 When I saw nothing more, the next three
 weeks,

Of Guido — "Nor the Church sees Christ"
thought I:

"Nothing is changed, however, wine is
wine

"And water only water in our house.

"Nor did I see that ugly doctor since

"That cure of the illness: just as I was
cured,

"I am married, — neither scarecrow will
return."

Three weeks, I chuckled — "How would
Giulia stare,

"And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh out-
right,

"Were it not impudent for brides to
talk!" —

Until one morning, as I sat and sang

At the broidery-frame alone i' the cham-
ber, — loud

Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,
And my name, "Guido," "Paolo," flung
like stones

From each to the other! In I ran to see.
There stood the very Guido and the priest
With sly face, — formal but nowise
afraid, —

While Pietro seemed all red and angry,
scarce

Able to stutter out his wrath in words;

And this it was that made my mother sob,
As he reproached her — "You have
murdered us,

"Me and yourself and this our child be-
side!"

Then Guido interposed "Murdered or not,
"Be it enough your child is now my wife!

"I claim and come to take her." Paul
put in,

"Consider — kinsman, dare I term you
so? —

"What is the good of your sagacity

"Except to counsel in a strait like this?

"I guarantee the parties man and wife

"Whether you like or loathe it, bless or
ban.

"May spilt milk be put back within the
bowl —

"The done thing, undone? You, it is,
we look

"For counsel to, you fittest will advise!

"Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does
marble good,

"Better we down on knees and scrub the
floor,

"Than sigh, 'the waste would make a
syllabub!"

"Help us so turn disaster to account,

"So predispose the groom, he needs shall
grace

"The bride with favour from the very first,

"Not begin marriage an embittered man!"

o He smiled, — the game so wholly in his
hands!

While fast and faster sobbed Violante —
"Ay,

"All of us murdered, past averting now!
"O my sin, O my secret!" and such like.

Then I began to half surmise the truth;
Something had happened, low, mean,
underhand,

False, and my mother was to blame, and I
To pity, whom all spoke of, none ad-
dressed:

I was the chattel that had caused a crime.
I stood mute, — those who tangled must
untie

The embroilment. Pietro cried "With- 50
draw, my child!

"She is not helpful to the sacrifice

"At this stage, — do you want the victim by

"While you discuss the value of her blood?

"For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:

"Go, child, and pray God help the in-
nocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when came
Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,
But movement on her mouth for make-
believe

Matters were somehow getting right again.
She bade me sit down by her side and hear. 60

"You are too young and cannot under-
stand,

"Nor did your father understand at first.

"I wished to benefit all three of us,

"And when he failed to take my meaning,
— why,

"I tried to have my way at unaware —

"Obtained him the advantage he refused.

"As if I put before him wholesome food

"Instead of broken victual, — he finds
change

"I' the viands, never cares to reason why,

"But falls to blaming me, would fling the 70
plate

"From window, scandalise the neighbour-
hood,

"Even while he smacks his lips, — men's
way, my child!

"But either you have prayed him un-
perverse

"Or I have talked him back into his wits:

"And Paolo was a help in time of need, —

"Guido, not much — my child, the way of
men!

"A priest is more a woman than a man,

"And Paul did wonders to persuade. In
short,

"Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and
says;

"My scheme was worth attempting: and 80
bears fruit,

"Gives you a husband and a noble name,

"A palace and no end of pleasant things.

"What do you care about a handsome
youth?

"They are so volatile, and tease their wives?"

"This is the kind of man to keep the house.

"We lose no daughter, — gain a son, that's all:

"For 'tis arranged we never separate,

"Nor miss, in our grey time of life, the tints

"Of you that colour eve to match with morn.

"In good or ill, we share and share alike,

"And cast our lots into a common lap,

"And all three die together as we lived!

to "Only, at Arezzo, — that's a Tuscan town,

"Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,

"But older far and finer much, say folk, —

"In a great palace where you will be queen,

"Know the Archbishop and the Governor,

"And we see homage done you ere we die.

"Therefore, be good and pardon!" —

"Pardon what?"

"You know things, I am very ignorant:

"All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins

30 From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,

And took me back to where my father leaned

Opposite Guido — who stood eyeing him, As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox

That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more, —

While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whiles

With the pen-point as to punish triumph there, —

And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife

"Until death part you!"

All since is one blank, Over and ended; a terrific dream.

30 It is the good of dreams — so soon they go! Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may —

Cry "The dread thing will never from my thoughts!"

Still, a few daylight doses of plain life, Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell

Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;

And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,

Where is the harm o' the horror? Gone! So here.

I know I wake, — but from what? Blank, I say!

This is the note of evil: for good lasts.

40 Even when Don Celestine bade "Search and find!"

"For your soul's sake, remember what is past,

"The better to forgive it," — all in vain! What was fast getting indistinct before,

Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps,

Between that first calm and this last, four years

Vanish, — one quarter of my life, you know.

I am held up, amid the nothingness, By one or two truths only — thence I hang,

And there I live, — the rest is death or dream,

All but those points of my support. I think

Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish

House:

There was a foreigner had trained a goat, A shuddering white woman of a beast,

To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks

Put close, which gave the creature room enough:

When she was settled there he, one by one, Took away all the sticks, left just the four

Whereon the little hoofs did really rest, There she kept firm, all underneath was air.

So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God, My hope, that came in answer to the

prayer,

Some hand would interpose and save me — hand

Which proved to be my friend's hand: and, — blest bliss, —

That fancy which began so faint at first, That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my

dark,

Which I perceive was promise of my child, The light his unborn face sent long be-

fore, —

God's way of breaking the good news to flesh.

That is all left now of those four bad years. Don Celestine urged "But remember

more!

"Other men's faults may help me find your own.

"I need the cruelty exposed, explained, "Or how can I advise you to forgive?"

He thought I could not properly forgive Unless I ceased forgetting, — which is

true:

For, bringing back reluctantly to mind My husband's treatment of me, — by a

light

That's later than my life-time, I review And comprehend much and imagine more,

And have but little to forgive at last. For now, — be fair and say, — is it not true

He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
To get enriched by marriage? Marriage
gave

Me and no money, broke the compact so:
He had a right to ask me on those terms,
As Pietro and Violante to declare
They would not give me: so the bargain
stood:

They broke it, and he felt himself ag-
grieved,

Became unkind with me to punish them.
They said 'twas he began deception first,

10 Nor, in one point whereto he pledged him-
self,

Kept promise: what of that, suppose it
were?

Echces die off, scarcely reverberate
For ever, — why should ill keep echoing
ill,

And never let our ears have done with
noise?

Then my poor parents took the violent way
To thwart him, — he must needs retali-
ate, — wrong,

Wrong, and all wrong, — better say, all
blind!

As I myself was, that is sure, who else
Had understood the mystery: for his wife

20 Was bound in some sort to help somehow
there.

It seems as if I might have interposed,
Blunted the edge of their resentment so,
Since he vexed me because they first vexed
him;

"I will entreat them to desist, submit,
"Give him the money and be poor in
peace, —

"Certainly not go tell the world: perhaps
"He will grow quiet with his gains."

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well!
But then you have to see first: I was blind.

30 That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,
The indirect, the unapproved of God:

You cannot find their author's end and
aim,

Not even to substitute your good for bad,
Your straight for the irregular; you stand
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep
That miss a man's mind, anger him just
twice

By trial at repairing the first fault.
Thus, when he blamed me, "You are a

coquette,
"A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,

40 "You look love-lures at theatre and
church,

"In walk, at window!" — that, I knew,
was false:

But why he charged me falsely, whither
sought

To drive me by such charge, — how could
I know?

So, unaware, I only made things worse.
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
Window, church, theatre, for good and
all,

As if he had been in earnest: that, you
know,

Was nothing like the object of his charge.
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate

The priest, whose name she read when she 50
would read

Those feigned false letters I was forced to
hear

Though I could read no word of, — he
should cease

Writing, — nay, if he minded prayer of
mine,

Cease from so much as even pass the street
Whereon our house looked, — in my ig-
norance

I was just thwarting Guido's true intent;
Which was, to bring about a wicked change
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless
man

To write indeed, and pass the house, and
more,

Till both of us were taken in a crime. 60

He ought not to have wished me thus act
lies,

Simulate folly: but, — wrong or right, the
wish, —

I failed to apprehend its drift. How
plain

It follows, — if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,
Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
I' the whole sad strange plot, the gro-
tesque intrigue

To make me and my friend unself our-
selves,

Be other man and woman than we were!
Think it out, you who have the time! for 70

me, —
I cannot say less; more I will not say.

Leave it to God to cover and undo!
Only, my dulness should not prove too
much!

— Not prove that in a certain other point
Wherein my husband blamed me, — and

you blame,

If I interpret smiles and shakes of head, —
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!

Must I speak? I am blamed that I for-
went

A way to make my husband's favour come.
That is true: I was firm, withstood, re- 80

fused . . .
— Women as you are, how can I find the
words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido
claimed

I had no right to give nor he to take;
We being in estrangement, soul from soul:

Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop
smiled,
Inquiring into privacies of life,
— Said I was blameable — (he stands for
God)

Nowise entitled to exemption there.
Then I obeyed, — as surely had obeyed
Were the injunction "Since your husband
bids,
"Swallow the burning coal he proffers
you!"

But I did wrong, and he gave wrong ad-
vice

Though he were thrice Archbishop, —
that, I know! —

10 Now I have got to die and see things clear.
Remember I was barely twelve years old —
A child at marriage: I was let alone
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life
still

Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
First . . . but I need not think of that
again —

Over and ended! Try and take the sense
Of what I signify, if it must be so.

After the first, my husband, for hate's
sake,

Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
10 Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to
bear,

"We have been man and wife, six months
almost:

"How long is this your comedy to last?

"Go this night to my chamber, not your
own!"

At which word, I did rush — most true
the charge —

And gain the Archbishop's house — he
stands for God —

And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,
Praying him hinder what my estranged
soul

Refused to bear, though patient of the
rest:

"Place me within a convent," I im-
plored —

30 "Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
"You praise in Her you bid me imitate!"
What did he answer? "Folly of igno-
rance!

"Know, daughter, circumstances make or
mar

"Virginity, — 'tis virtue or 'tis vice.

"That which was glory in the Mother of
God

"Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
"Created to be mother of mankind.

"Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's
speech

"'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth'—

10 "Pouted" But I choose rather to remain

"'Single' — why, she had spared herself
forthwith

"Further probation by the apple and
snake,

"Been pushed straight out of Paradise!
For see —

"If motherhood be qualified impure,
"I catch you making God command Eve
sin!

"— A blasphemy so like these Molinists',
"I must suspect you dip into their books."
Then he pursued "'Twas in your cove-
nant!"

No! There my husband never used
deceit.

He never did by speech nor act imply
"Because of our soul's yearning that we
meet

"And mix in soul through flesh, which
yours and mine

"Wear and impress, and make their
visible selves,

"— All which means, for the love of you
and me,

"Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"
He only stipulated for the wealth;

Honest so far. But when he spoke as
plain —

Dreadfully honest also — "Since our
souls

"Stand each from each, a whole world's
width between,

"Give me the fleshly vesture I can reach 6

"And rend and leave just fit for hell to
burn!" —

Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's
own sake

Imperilled by polluting mine, — I say,
I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's
smile;

— It seemed so stale and worn a way o'
the world,

As though 'twere nature frowning —
"Here is Spring,

"The sun shines as he shone at Adam's
fall,

"The earth requires that warmth reach
everywhere:

"What, must your patch of snow be saved 7
forsooth

"Because you rather fancy snow than
flowers?"

Something in this style he began with me.
Last he said, savagely for a good man,

"This explains why you call your hus-
band harsh,

"Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love.
God's Bread!

"The poor Count has to manage a mere
child

"Whose parents leave untaught the
simplest things

"Their duty was and privilege to teach, —
 "Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore:
 they laugh
 "And leave the Count the task, — or leave
 it me!"

Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.

"I am not ignorant, — know what I say,
 "Declaring this is sought for hate, not
 love.

"Sir, you may hear things like almighty
 God.

"I tell you that my housemate, yes — the
priest

"My husband's brother, Canon Giro-
lamo —

o "Has taught me what depraved and mis-
 named love

"Means, and what outward signs denote
 the sin,

"For he solicits me and says he loves,

"The idle young priest with nought else
 to do.

"My husband sees this, knows this, and
 lets be.

"Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"

" — More scandal, and against a priest
 this time!

"What, 'tis the Canon now?" — less snap-
 pishly —

"Rise up, my child, for such a child you
 are,

"The rod were too advanced a punish-
 ment!

o "Let's try the honeyed cake. A parable!
 "Without a parable spake He not to
 them."

"There was a ripe round long black tooth-
 some fruit,

"Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May.

"And, to the tree, said . . . either the
 spirit o' the fig,

"Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,

"Archbishop of the orchard — had I time

"To try o' the two which fits in best:
 indeed

"It might be the Creator's self, but then

"The tree should bear an apple, I sup-
 pose, —

o "Well, anyhow, one with authority said

"Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-
 pecker —

"The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!"

"Nay," with a founce, replied the restif
 fig,

"I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:

"He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,

"Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!"

"So, back she flopped into her bunch of
 leaves.

"He flew off, left her, — did the natural
 lord, —

"And lo, three hundred thousand bees and
 wasps

"Found her out, feasted on her to the 40
 shuck:

"Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no
 bite!

"The moral, — fools elude their proper lot,

"Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.

"Therefore go home, embrace your hus-
 band quick!

"Which if his Canon brother chance to see,

"He will the sooner back to book again."

So, home I did go; so, the worst befell:

So, I had proof the Archbishop was just
 man,

And hardly that, and certainly no more.

For, miserable consequence to me, 50

My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at
 all,

His brother's boldness grew effrontery
 soon,

And my last stay and comfort in myself
 Was forced from me: henceforth I looked

to God

Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
 Should have fair walls, gay windows for

the world.

God's glimmer, that came through the
 ruin-top.

Was witness why all lights were quenched
 inside:

Henceforth I asked God counsel, not man-
 kind.

So, when I made the effort, freed myself, 60

They said — "No care to save appearance
 here!

"How cynic, — when, how wanton, were
 enough!"

— Adding, it all came of my mother's
 life —

My own real mother, whom I never knew,
 Who did wrong (if she needs must have
 done wrong)

Through being all her life, not my four
 years,

At mercy of the hateful: every beast
 O' the field was wont to break that foun-
 tain-fence,

Trample the silver into mud so murk
 Heaven could not find itself reflected there. 70

Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy
 pool,

"Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
 "To the daughter-stream where Guido
 dipt and drank!"

Well, since she had to bear this brand —
 let me!

The rather do I understand her now,
 From my experience of what hate calls

love, —

Much love might be in what their love
 called hate.

If she sold . . . what they call, sold . . .
me, her child —

I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
That I at least might try be good and pure,
Begin to live untempted, not go doomed
And done with ere once found in fault, as
she.

Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?
Why should I trust those that speak ill of
you,

When I mistrust who speaks even well of
them?

Why, since all bound to do me good, did
harm,

10 May not you, seeming as you harmed me
most,

Have meant to do most good — and feed
your child

From bramble-bush, whom not one
orchard-tree

But drew bough back from, nor let one
fruit fall?

This it was for you sacrificed your babe?
Gained just this, giving your heart's hope
away

As I might give mine, loving it as you,
If . . . but that never could be asked of
me!

There, enough! I have my support again,
Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,
20 Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give

straight to God, without a further care, —
but not to any parent in the world. —

So to be safe: why is it we repine?

What guardianship were safer could we
choose?

All human plans and projects come to
nought:

My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that; no plan nor project! God
shall care!

And now you are not tired? How patient
then

All of you, — Oh yes, patient this long
while

30 Listening, and understanding, I am sure!
Four days ago, when I was sound and

well

And like to live, no one would understand.
People were kind, but smiled "And what
of him,

"Your friend, whose tonsure the rich
dark-brown hides?

"There, there! — your lover, do we dream
he was?

"A priest too — never were such naughti-
ness!

"Still, he thinks many a long think, never
fear,

"After the shy pale lady, — lay so light

"For a moment in his arms, the lucky
one!"

And so on: wherefore should I blame you
much?

So we are made, such difference in minds,
Such difference too in eyes that see the
minds!

That man, you misinterpret and mis-
prise —

The glory of his nature, I had thought,
Shot itself out in white light, blazed the
truth

Through every atom of his act with me:
Yet where I point you, through the crystal

shrine,
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,

You all descry a spider in the midst.
One says "The head of it is plain to see," 50

And one, "They are the feet by which I
judge,"

All say, "Those films were spun by nothing
else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God,
Nor think of him again, for gratitude.

Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend
itself

In one attempt more to disperse the stain,
The mist from other breath fond mouths
have made,

About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,

And people need assurance in their doubt 60
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,

The weak a saviour and the vile a foe, —
Let him be present, by the name invoked,

Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!

There,
Strength comes already with the utterance!
I will remember once more for his sake
The sorrow: for he lives and is belied.
Could he be here, how he would speak for
me!

I had been miserable three drear years
In that dread palace and lay passive now, 70
When I first learned there could be such a
man.

Thus it fell: I was at a public play,
In the last days of Carnival last March,
Brought there I knew not why, but now
know well.

My husband put me where I sat, in front;
Then crouched down, breathed cold
through me from behind,

Stationed i' the shadow, — none in front
could see, —

I, it was, faced the stranger-throng be-
neath,

The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one
stare,

Voices one buzz. I looked but to the 80
stage,

Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged

"True life is only love, love only bliss:
 "I love thee — thee I love!" then they
 embraced.
 I looked thence to the ceiling and the
 walls, —
 Over the crowd, those voices and those
 eyes, —
 My thoughts went through the roof and
 out, to Rome
 On wings of music, waft of measured
 words, —
 Set me down there, a happy child again
 Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,
 Hearing my parents praise past festas
 more,
 And seeing they were old if I was young,
 Yet wondering why they still would end
 discourse
 With "We must soon go, you abide your
 time,
 "And, — might we haply see the proper
 friend
 "Throw his arm over you and make you
 safe!"

Sudden I saw him; into my lap there fell
 A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream
 And brought me from the air and laid me
 low,
 As ruined as the soaring bee that's reached
 (So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
 By the dust-handful. There the comfits
 lay:
 I looked to see who flung them, and I
 faced
 This Caponsacchi, looking up in tu.n.
 Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
 Whoever flung them, his was not the
 hand, —
 Up rose the round face and good-natured
 grin
 Of one who, in effect, had played the
 prank,
 From covert close beside the earnest
 face, —
 Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.
 He was my husband's cousin, privileged
 To throw the thing: the other, silent,
 grave,
 Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
 "Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would
 flee!"
 The psalm runs not "I hope, I pray for
 wings," —
 Not "If wings fall from heaven, I fix them
 fast," —
 Simply "How good it were to fly and rest,
 "Have hope now, and one day expect con-
 tent!
 "How well to do what I shall never do!"
 So I said "Had there been a man like that,

"To lift me with his strength out of all ad-
 strife
 "Into the calm, how I could fly and rest!
 "I have a keeper in the garden here
 "Whose sole employment is to strike me
 low
 "If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
 "Life means with me successful feigning
 death,
 "Lying stone-like, eluding notice so,
 "Forgoing here the turf and there the sky.
 "Suppose that man had been instead of
 this!"

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
 — Had tripped up to the raised place 50
 where I sat —
 "Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard!
 "Because you must be hurt, to look aus-
 tere
 "As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend
 "A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close?
 "Keep on your knees, do! Beg her to for-
 give!
 "My cornet¹ battered like a cannon-ball.
 "Good-bye, I'm gone!" — nor waited the
 reply.

That night at supper, out my husband
 broke,
 "Why was that throwing, that buffoonery?
 "Do you think I am your dupe? What 60
 man would dare
 "Throw comfits in a stranger lady's lap?
 "Twas knowledge of you bred such inso-
 lence
 "In Caponsacchi; he dared shoot the
 bolt,
 "Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.
 "How could you see him this once and no
 more,
 "When he is always haunting hereabout
 "At the street-corner or the palace-side,
 "Publishing my shame and your impu-
 dence?
 "You are a wanton, — I a dupe, you
 think?
 "O Christ, what hinders that I kill her 70
 quick?"
 Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a
 thrust.

All this, now, — being not so strange to
 me,
 Used to such misconception day by day
 And broken-in to bear, — I bore, this
 time,
 More quietly than woman should perhaps;
 Repeated the mere truth and held my
 tongue.

¹ Cornet: a piece of paper twisted into a
 conical shape (such as is commonly used by gro-
 cers).

Then he said, "Since you play the ignorant
"I shall instruct you. This amour —
commenced

"Or finished or midway in act, all's
one, —

"Tis the town-talk; so my revenge shall
be.

"Does he presume because he is a priest?

"I warn him that the sword I wear shall
pink

"His lily-scented cassock through and
through,

"Next time I catch him underneath your
eaves!"

But he had threatened with the sword so
oft

10 And, after all, not kept his promise. All
I said was "Let God save the innocent!

"Moreover death is far from a bad fate.

"I shall go pray for you and me, not him;

"And then I look to sleep, come death or,
worse,

"Life." So, I slept.

There may have elapsed a week,
When Margherita, — called my waiting-
maid,

Whom it is said my husband found too
fair —

Who stood and heard the charge and the
reply,

Who never once would let the matter rest

20 From that night forward, but rang changes
still

On this the thrust and that the shame, and
how

Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,
And what a paragon was this same priest

She talked about until I stopped my
ears, —

She said, "A week is gone; you comb your
hair,

"Then go mope in a corner, cheek on
palm,

"Till night comes round again, — so,
waste a week

"As if your husband menaced you in sport.

"Have not I some acquaintance with his
tricks?

30 "Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man
"Who made and sang the rhymes about me
once!

"For why? They sent him to the wars
next day.

"Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend

"Who wagered on the whiteness of my
breast, —

"The swarth skins of our city in dispute:
"For, though he paid me proper compli-
ment,

"The Count well knew he was besotted with

"Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,

"(As all the town knew save my for-
eigner)

"He found and wedded presently, — 4

"Why need

"Better revenge?" — the Count asked.

But what's here?

"A priest that does not fight, and cannot
wed,

"Yet must be dealt with! If the Count
took fire

"For the poor pastime of a minute, —
me —

"What were the conflagration for yourself,
"Countess and lady-wife and all the rest?

"The priest will perish; you will grieve
too late:

"So shall the city-ladies' handsomest

"Frankest and liberalest gentleman

"Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog

"Hanging's too good for. Is there no
escape?

"Were it not simple Christian charity

"To warn the priest be on his guard, —
save him

"Assured death, save yourself from caus-
ing it?

"I meet him in the street. Give me a
glove,

"A ring to show for token! Mum's the
word!"

I answered "If you were, as styled, my
maid,

"I would command you: as you are, you
say,

"My husband's intimate, — assist his
wife

"Who can do nothing but entreat 'Be 6
still!'

"Even if you speak truth and a crime is
planned,

"Leave help to God as I am forced to do!

"There is not other help or we should
craze,

"Seeing such evil with no human cure.

"Reflect that God, who makes the storm
desist,

"Can make an angry violent heart sub-
side.

"Why should we venture teach Him gov-
ernance?

"Never address me on this subject more!"

Next night she said "But I went, all the
same,

" — Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his 7
house,

"And come back stuffed with news I must
outpour.

"I told him 'Sir, my mistress is a stone:

"Why should you harm her for no good
you get?

"For you do harm her — prowl about
our place

"With the Count never distant half the
street,

"Lurking at every corner, would you look!
 "'Tis certain she has witched you with a spell.
 "'Are there not other beauties at your beck?
 "'We all know, Donna This and Monna That
 "'Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze!
 "'Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold!
 "'And he — oh, he turned first white and then red,
 "'And then — 'To her behest I bow myself,
 "'Whom I love with my body and my soul;
 "'Only a word i' the bowing! See, I write
 "'One little word, no harm to see or hear!
 "'Then, fear no further!' This is what he wrote.
 "'I know you cannot read, — therefore, let me!
 "'My idol!" . . .

But I took it from her hand
 And tore it into shreds. "Why join the rest
 "Who harm me? Have I ever done you wrong?
 "People have told me 'tis you wrong myself:
 "Let it suffice I either feel no wrong
 "Or else forgive it, — yet you turn my foe!
 "The others hunt me and you throw a noose!"
 She muttered "Have your wilful way!"
 I slept.

Whereupon . . . no, I leave my husband out!
 It is not to do him more hurt, I speak.
 Let it suffice, when misery was most,
 One day, I swooned and got a respite so,
 She stooped as I was slowly coming to,
 This Margherita, ever on my trace,
 And whispered — "Caponasacchi!"

If I drowned,
 But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,
 And found their first sight was a star! I turned —
 For the first time, I let her have her will,
 Heard passively, — "The imposthume at such head,
 "One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve, —
 "And still no glance the good physician's way
 "Who rids you of the torment in a trice!

"Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.
 "He may prevent your husband, kill himself,
 "So desperate and all fordone is he!
 "Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day!
 "A sonnet from Mirtillo. 'Peerless 40
fair . . .
 "All poetry is difficult to read,
 " — The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks
 "Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,
 "And for that purpose asks an interview.
 "I can write, I can grant it in your name,
 "Or, what is better, lead you to his house.
 "Your husband dashes you against the stones;
 "This man would place each fragment in a shrine:
 "You hate him, love your husband!"

I returned
 "It is not true I love my husband, — no, 50
 "Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak,
 " — Assured that what you say is false, the same:
 "Much as when once, to me a little child,
 "A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,
 "A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,
 "Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head
 "In his two hands, 'Here's she will let me speak!
 "You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,
 "I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth;
 "And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed 60
 to-day,
 "Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh!
 "The angels, met in conclave, crowned me!' — thus
 "He gibbered and I listened; but I knew
 "All was delusion, ere folk interposed
 "Unfasten him, the maniac!' Thus I know
 "All your report of Caponsacchi false,
 "Folly or dreaming; I have seen so much
 "By that adventure at the spectacle,
 "The face I fronted that one first, last time:
 "He would belie it by such words and 70
 thoughts.
 "Therefore while you profess to show him me,
 "I ever see his own face. Get you gone!"
 " — That will I, nor once open mouth again, —
 "No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost!
 "On your head be the damage, so adieu!"

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,

Till . . . what a strange thing now is to declare!

Since I say anything, say all if true!

And how my life seems lengthened as to serve!

It may be idle or inopportune,

But, true? — why, what was all I said but truth,

Even when I found that such as are untrue

Could only take the truth in through a lie?

Now — I am speaking truth to the Truth's self:

10 God will lend credit to my words this time.

It had got half through April. I arose
One vivid daybreak, — who had gone to bed

In the old way my wont those last three years,

Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.

The last sound in my ear, the over-night,

Had been a something let drop on the sly

In prattle by Margherita, "Soon enough

"Gaieties end, now Easter's past: a week,

"And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome, —

20 "Everyone leaves the town for Rome, this Spring, —

"Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,

"Resigns himself and follows with the flock."

I heard this drop and drop like rain outside
Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke:

So had I heard with like indifference,

"And Michael's pair of wings will arrive first

"At Rome, to introduce the company,

"And bear him from our picture where he fights

"Satan, — expect to have that dragon loose

30 "And never a defender!" — my sole thought

Being still, as night came, "Done, another day!

"How good to sleep and so get nearer death!" —

When, what, first thing at daybreak, pierced the sleep

With a summons to me? Up I sprang alive,

Light in me, light without me, everywhere
Change! A broad yellow sunbeam was let fall

From heaven to earth, — a sudden draw-bridge lay,

Along which marched a myriad merry notes,

Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed

In rival dance, companions new-born too. 40

On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed

Shook diamonds on each dull grey lattice-square,

As first one, then another bird leapt by,
And light was off, and lo was back again,

Always with one voice, — where are two such joys? —

The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth,

Stood on the terrace, — o'er the roofs such sky!

My heart sang, "I too am to go away,
"I too have something I must care about,

"Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome! 50

"The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,

"And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,

"Falls out of the procession that befits,
"From window here to window there, with all

"The world to choose, — so well he knows his course?

"I have my purpose and my motive too,
"My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!

Had I been dead! How right to be alive!

Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,

Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword.

Or the poison, — poison, sword, was but a trick,

"Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!

"My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!

"Yesterday, but for the sin, — ah, nameless be

"The deed I could have dared against myself!

"Now — see if I will touch an unripe fruit,

"And risk the health I want to have and use!

"Not to live, now, would be the wickedness, —

"For life means to make haste and go to Rome

"And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once!"

Now, understand here, by no means mistake!

Long ago had I tried to leave that house
When it seemed such procedure would stop sin;

And still failed more the more I tried — at first

The Archbishop, as I told you, — next,
our lord
The Governor, — indeed I found my way,
I went to the great palace where he rules,
Though I knew well 'twas he who, —
when I gave
A jewel or two, themselves had given me.
Back to my parents, — since they wanted
bread,
They who had never let me want a nose-
gay, — he
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept
What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly
theirs,
Though all the while my husband's most
of all!
I knew well who had spoke the word
wrought this:
Yet, being in extremity, I fled
To the Governor, as I say, — scarce
opened lip
When — the cold cruel snicker close be-
hind —
Guido was on my trace, already there,
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and
smile,
And I — pushed back to him and, for my
pains
Paid with . . . but why remember what
is past?
I sought out a poor friar the people call
The Roman, and confessed my sin which
came
Of their sin, — that fact could not be re-
pressed, —
The frightfulness of my despair in God:
And, feeling, through the grate, his horror
shake,
Implored him, "Write for me who cannot
write,
"Apprise my parents, make them rescue
me!
"You bid me be courageous and trust God:
"Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and
write
"Dear friends, who used to be my parents
once,
"And now declare you have no part in
me,
"This 's some riddle I want wit to solve,
"Since you must love me with no dif-
ference.
"Even suppose you altered, — there's
your hate,
"To ask for: hate of you two dearest
ones
"I shall find liker love than love found
here,
"If husbands love their wi es. Take me
away
"And hate me as you do the gnats and
fleas,
"Even the scorpions! How I shall re-
joice!"

"Write that and save me!" And he pro-
mised — wrote
Or did not write; things never changed at
all:
He was not like the Augustinian here! 40
Last, in a desperation I appealed
To friends, whoever wished me better
days,
To Guillichini, that's of kin, — "What,
I —
"Travel to Rome with you? A flying gout
"Bids me deny my heart and mind my
leg!"
Then I tried Conti, used to brave —
laugh back
The louring thunder when his cousin
scowled
At me protected by his presence: "You —
"Who well know what you cannot save me
from, —
"Carry me off! What frightens you, a 50
priest?"
He shook his head, looked grave —
"Above my strength!"
"Guido has claws that scratch, shows
feline teeth;
"A formidabler foe than I dare fret:
"Give me a dog to deal with, twice the
size!
"Of course I am a priest and Canon too,
"But . . . by the bye . . . though both,
not quite so bold
'As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest,
"The personage in such ill odour here
"Because of the reports — pure birth o'
the brain!
"Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint 60
George
"To slay the monster, set the Princess free,
"And have the whole High-Altar to him-
self:
"I always think so when I see that piece
"I' the Pieve, that's his church and mine,
you know:
"Though you drop eyes at mention of his
name!"

That name had got to take a half-gro-
tesque
Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,
Like any by-word, broken bit of song
Born with a meaning, changed by mouth
and mouth
That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance 70
Bids, till it now means nought but ugliness
And perhaps shame.

— All this intends to say,
That, over-night, the notion of escape
Had seemed distemper, dreaming; and
the name, —
Not the man, but the name of him, thus
made

Into a mockery and disgrace, — why, she
Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,
“I name his name, and there you start
and wince

“As criminal from the red tongs’
touch!” — yet now,
Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me
bright,
Choosing which butterfly should bear my
news, —

The white, the brown one, or that tinier
blue, —

The Margherita, I detested so,
In she came — “The fine day, the good
Spring time!

10 “What, up and out at window? That is
best.

“No thought of Caponsacchi? — who
stood there

“All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,
“Under the pelting of your water-spout —

“Looked last look at your lattice ere he
leave

“Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome.

“Ay, go to looking-glass and make you
fine,

“While he may die ere touch one least
loose hair

“You drag at with the comb in such a
rage!”

I turned — “Tell Caponsacchi he may
come!”

20 “Tell him to come? Ah, but, for charity,
“A truce to fooling! Come? What, —
come this eve?

“Peter and Paul! But I see through the
trick!

“Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his
head,

“Flung from your terrace! No joke,
sincere truth?”

How plainly I perceived hell flash and
fadc

O’ the face of her, — the doubt that first
paled joy,

Then, final reassurance I indeed
Was caught now, never to be free again!
What did I care? — who felt myself of
force

30 To play with silk, and spurn the horsehair-
springe.

“But — do you know that I have bade
him come,

“And in your own name? I presumed so
much,

“Knowing the thing you needed in your
heart.

“But somehow — what had I to show in
proof?

“He would not come: half-promised, that
was all,

“And wrote the letters you refused to read.
“What is the message that shall move him
now?”

“After the Ave Maria, at first dark,
“I will be standing on the terrace, say!”

“I would I had a good long lock of hair
“Should prove I was not lying! Never
mind!”

Off she went — “May he not refuse, that’s
all —

“Fearing a trick!”

I answered, “He will come.”

And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up
To God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,
Who, for our own good, makes the need
extreme,

Till at the last He puts forth might and
saves.

An old rhyme came into my head and rang
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God, 5
Hid herself, from the Paynims that pur-
sued,

In a cave’s heart; until a thunderstorm,
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch
and prey

And they laughed — “Thanks to light-
ning, ours at last!”

And she cried “Wrath of God, assert His
love!

“Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His
child!”

And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its
flash,

Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful
sword

She brandished till pursuers strewed the
ground,

So did the souls within them die away, 6
As o’er the prostrate bodies, sworded,
safe,

She walked forth to the solitudes and
Christ:

So should I grasp the lightning and be
saved!

And still, as the day wore, the trouble
grew
Whereby I guessed there would be born a
star,

Until at an intense throe of the dusk,
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at
last

Where the deliverer waited me: the same
Silent and solemn face, I first descried
At the spectacle, confronted mine once
more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so
The manhood, wasted then, was still at
watch
To save me yet a second time: no change
Here, though all else changed in the chang-
ing world!

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade,
In some such sense as this, whatever the
phrase.

"Friend, foolish words were borne from
you to me;

"Your soul behind them is the pure strong
wind,

"Not dust and feathers which its breath
may bear:

"These to the witless seem the wind it-
self,

"Since proving thus the first of it they feel.

"If by mischance you blew offence my
way,

"The straws are dropt, the wind desists no
whit,

"And how such strays were caught up in
the street

"And took a motion from you, why in-
quire?

"I speak to the strong soul, no weak dis-
guise.

"If it be truth, — why should I doubt it
truth? —

"You serve God specially, as priests are
bound,

"And care about me, stranger as I am,

"So far as wish my good, — that miracle,

"I take to intimate He wills you serve

"Py saving me, — what else can He direct?

"Here is the service. Since a long while
now,

"I am in course of being put to death:

"While death concerned nothing but me,
I bowed

"The head and bade, in heart, my husband
strike.

"Now I imperil something more, it seems,

"Something that's truelier me than this
myself,

"Something I trust in God and you to save.

"You go to Rome, they tell me: take me
there,

"Put me back with my people!"

He replied —

The first word I heard ever from his lips,
All himself in it, — an eternity

Of speech, to match the immeasurable
depth

O' the soul that then broke silence — "I
am yours."

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,
Lead on, nor pause before it should stand
still

Above the House o' the Babe, — my babe
to be,

That knew me first and thus made me
know him,

That had his right of life and claim on 4
mine,

And would not let me die till he was born,
But pricked me at the heart to save us both,

Saying "Have you the will? Leave God
the way!"

And the way was Caponsacchi — "mine,"
thank God!

He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light! 1
know,

Next night there was a cloud came, and not
he:

But I prayed through the darkness till it
broke

And let him shine. The second night, he
came.

"The plan is rash; the project desperate: 50
"In such a flight needs must I risk your
life,

"Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,
"Ground for your husband's rancour and
revenge" —

So he began again, with the same face.
I felt that, the same loyalty — one star

Turning now red that was so white before —
One service apprehended newly: just

A word of mine and there the white was
back!

"No, friend, for you will take me! 'Tis
yourself

"Risk all, not I, — who let you, for I trust 60
"In the compensating great God: enough!

"I know you: when is it that you will
come?"

"To-morrow at the day's dawn." Then I
heard

What I should do: how to prepare for
flight

And where to fly.

That night my husband bade
— You, whom I loathe, beware you
break my sleep

"This whole night! Couch beside me
like the corpse

"I would you were!" The rest you know,
I think —

How I found Caponsacchi and escaped.

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus 70
Christ!

Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself
mad'st once,

"He hath a devil" — say he was Thy saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show —
unshroud

- In Thine own time the glory of the soul
 If aught obscure, — if ink-spot, from vile
 pens
 Scribbling a charge against him — (I was
 glad
 Then, for the first time, that I could not
 write) —
 Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!
 For me,
 'Tis otherwise: let men take, sift my
 thoughts
 — Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun
 to bleach!
 I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die,
 "Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!"
 10 Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand
 Holding my hand across the world, — a
 sense
 That reads, as only such can read, the mark
 God sets on woman, signifying so
 She should — shall peradventure — be
 divine;
 Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars
 the print
 And makes confusion, leaves the thing men
 see,
 — Not this man sees, — who from his
 soul, rewrites
 The obliterated charter, — love and strength
 Mending what's marred. "So kneels a
 votarist,
 20 "Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot
 "Where shrine once was, where temple
 yet may be,
 "Purging the place but worshipping the
 while,
 "By faith and not by sight, sight clearest
 so, —
 "Such way the saints work," — says Don
 Celestine.
 But I, not privileged to see a saint
 Of old when such walked earth with crown
 and palm,
 If I call "saint" what saints call something
 else —
 The saints must bear with me, impute the
 fault
 To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,
 30 Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year
 Nor recognise the orb which Spring-
 flowers know.
 But if meanwhile some insect with a heart
 Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift
 joy —
 Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my
 dwarfed cup,
 Crept close to me, brought lustre for the
 dark,
 Comfort against the cold, — what though
 excess
 Of comfort should miscall the creature —
 sun?
 What did the sun to hinder while harsh
 hands
- Petal by petal, crude and colourless,
 Tore me? This one heart gave me all the 46
 Spring!
- Is all told? There's the journey: and
 where's time
 To tell you how that heart burst out in
 shine?
 Yet certain points do press on me too hard.
 Each place must have a name, though I
 forget:
 How strange it was — there where the
 plain begins
 And the small river mitigates its flow —
 When eve was fading fast, and my soul
 sank,
 And he divined what surge of bitterness,
 In overtaking me, would float me back
 Whence I was carried by the striding day — 50
 So, — "This grey place was famous once,"
 said he —
 And he began that legend of the place
 As if in answer to the unspoken fear,
 And told me all about a brave man dead,
 Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
 How did he know too, — at that town's
 approach
 By the rock-side, — that in coming near
 the signs
 Of life, the house-roofs and the church and
 tower,
 I saw the old boundary and wall o' the
 world
 Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold, 60
 As if the broken circlet joined again,
 Tightened itself about me with no break, —
 As if the town would turn Arezzo's self, —
 The husband there, — the friends my
 enemies,
 All ranged against me, not an avenue
 To try, but would be blocked and drive me
 back
 On him, — this other, . . . oh the heart
 in that!
 Did not he find, bring, put into my arms
 A new-born babe? — and I saw faces
 beam
 Of the young mother proud to teach me 70
 joy,
 And gossips round expecting my surprise
 At the sudden hole through earth that lets
 in heaven.
 I could believe himself by his strong will
 Had woven around me what I thought the
 world
 We went along in, every circumstance,
 Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped
 so well!
 For, through the journey, was it natural
 Such comfort should arise from first to
 last?
 As I look back, all is one milky way;
 Still bettered more, the more remembered, 80
 so

Do new stars bud while I but search for old,
 And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him—
 Him I now see make the shine everywhere.
 Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,
 The cloud of weariness about my soul
 Clogging too heavily, sucked down all
 sense, —
 Still its last voice was, "He will watch
 and care;
 "Let the strength go, I am content: he
 stays!"
 I doubt not he did stay and care for all —
 From that sick minute when the head swam
 round,
 And the eyes looked their last and died on
 him,
 As in his arms he caught me, and, you say,
 Carried me in, that tragical red eve,
 And laid me where I next returned to life
 In the other red of morning, two red plates
 That crushed together, crushed the time
 between,
 And are since then a solid fire to me, —
 When in, my dreadful husband and the
 world
 Broke, — and I saw him, master, by hell's
 right,
 And saw my angel helplessly held back
 By guards that helped the malice — the
 lamb prone,
 The serpent towering and triumphant —
 then
 Came all the strength back in a sudden
 swell,
 I did for once see right, do right, give
 tongue
 The adequate protest: for a worm must
 turn
 If it would have its wrong observed by God.
 I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside
 That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me, lay
 low
 The neutraliser of all good and truth.
 If I sinned so, — never obey voice more
 O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us —
 "Bear!"
 Not — "Stand by, bear to see my angels
 bear!"
 I am clear it was on impulse to serve God
 Not save myself, — no — nor my child
 unborn!
 Had I else waited patiently till now? —
 Who saw my old kind parents, silly-sooth
 And too much trustful, for their worst of
 faults,
 Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and starved,
 cast out
 Into the kennel: I remonstrated,
 Then sank to silence, for, — their woes at
 end,
 Themselves gone, — only I was left to
 plague.
 If only I was threatened and belied,

What matter? I could bear it and did
 bear;
 It was a comfort, still one lot for all:
 They were not persecuted for my sake
 And I, estranged, the single happy one.
 But when at last, all by myself I stood
 Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise,
 Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,
 And take the angel's hand was sent to 50
 help —
 And found the old adversary athwart the
 path —
 Not my hand simply struck from the
 angel's, but
 The very angel's self made foul i' the face
 By the fiend who struck there, — that I
 would not bear,
 That only I resisted! So, my first
 And last resistance was invincible.
 Prayers move God; threats, and nothing
 else, move men!
 I must have prayed a man as he were God
 When I implored the Governor to right
 My parents' wrongs: the answer was a 60
 smile.
 The Archbishop, — did I clasp his feet
 enough,
 Hide my face hotly on them, while I told
 More than I dared make my own mother
 know?
 The profit was — compassion and a jest.
 This time, the foolish prayers were done
 with, right
 Used might, and solemnised the sport at
 once.
 All was against the combat: vantage,
 mine?
 The runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife,
 In company with the plan-coniving
 priest?
 Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I struck, 70
 bare,
 At foe from head to foot in magic mail,
 And off it withered, cobweb-armoury
 Against the lightning! 'Twas truth singed
 the lies
 And saved me, not the vain sword nor weak
 speech!
 You see, I will not have the service fail!
 I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
 Others may want and wish, I wish nor want
 One point o' the circle plainer, where I
 stand
 Traced round about with white to front
 the world.
 What of the calumny I came across, 80
 What o' the way to the end? — the end
 crowns all.
 The judges judged aright i' the main, gave
 me
 The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce
 From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt,

- With the quiet nuns, — God recompense
the good!
Who said and sang away the ugly past.
And, when my final fortune was revealed,
What safety while, amid my parents' arms,
My babe was given me! Yes, he saved
my babe:
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-
like thing,
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble:
back
Had it returned nor ever let me see!
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me
live
10 And give my bird the life among the leaves
God meant him! Weeks and months of
quietude,
I could lie in such peace and learn so
much —
Begin the task, I see how needful now,
Of understanding somewhat of my past, —
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.
Therefore, because this man restored my
soul,
All has been right; I have gained my gain,
enjoyed
As well as suffered, — nay, got foretaste
too
Of better life beginning where this ends —
20 All through the breathing-while allowed
me thus,
Which let good premonitions reach my
soul
Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow
And interpenetrate and change my heart,
Uncrossed by what was wicked, — nay,
unkind.
For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,
Nobody did me one disservice more,
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke
the love
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,
Born all in love, with nought to spoil the
bliss
30 A whole long fortnight: in a life like mine
A fortnight filled with bliss is long and
much.
All women are not mothers of a boy,
Though they live twice the length of my
whole life,
And, as they fancy, happily all the same.
There I lay, then, all my great fortnight
long,
As if it would continue, broaden out
Happily more and more, and lead to
heaven:
Christmas before me, — was not that a
chance?
I never realised God's birth before —
40 How he grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
Lying a little on my breast like hers.
So all went on till, just four days ago —
The night and the tap.
- Oh it shall be success
To the whole of our poor family! My
friends
. . . Nay, father and mother, — Give me
back my word!
They have been rudely stripped of life,
disgraced
Like children who must needs go clothed
too fine,
Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent.
If they too much affected frippery, 50
They have been punished and submit them-
selves,
Say no word: all is over, they see God
Who will not be extreme to mark their fault
Or He had granted respite: they are safe.
For that most woeful man my husband
once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital
breath,
I — pardon him? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.
Let him make God amends, — none, none 60
to me
Who thank him rather that, whereas strange
fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced
divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond: this blood of
mine
Flies forth exultingly at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and thanks
the blow.
We shall not meet in this world nor the
next,
But where will God be absent? In His
face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too:
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed! 70
And as my presence was importunate, —
My earthly good, temptation and a snare, —
Nothing about me but drew somehow down
His hate upon me, — somewhat so excused
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth
of him, —
May my evanishment for evermore
Help further to relieve the heart that cast
Such object of its natural loathing forth!
So he was made; he nowise made himself:
I could not love him, but his mother did. 80
His soul has never lain beside my soul:
But for the unresisting body, — thanks!
He burned that garment spotted by the
flesh.
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined:
plague
It caught, and disinfection it had craved
Still but for Guido; I am saved through
him
So as by fire; to him — thanks and fare-
well!

Even for my babe, my boy, there's safety
thence —
From the sudden death of me, I mean:
we poor
Weak souls, how we endeavour to be
strong!
I was already using up my life, —
This portion, now, should do him such a
good,
This other go to keep off such an ill!
The great life; see, a breath and it is gone!
So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means so
much.
to Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His
work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand He trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; He shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearer: if my babe
Outlived the hour — and he has lived two
weeks —
It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn
black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at
rest,
20 Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt He will explain in
time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all —
Only his mother's, born of love not hate!
So shall I have my rights in after-time.
It seems absurd, impossible to-day;
So seems so much else, not explained but
known!
Ah! Friends, I thank and bless you every
one!
30 No more now: I withdraw from earth and
man
To my own soul, compose myself for God.
Well, and there is more! Yes, my end of
breath
Shall bear away my soul in being true!
He is still here, not outside with the world,
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place!
'Tis now, when I am most upon the move,
I feel for what I verily find — again
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,
The heart and its immeasurable love
40 Of my one friend, my only, all my own,
Who put his breast between the spears and
me.
Ever with Caponsacchi! Otherwise
Here alone would be failure, loss to me —
How much more loss to him, with life de-
barred
From giving life, love locked from love's
display,

The day-star stopped its task that makes
night morn!
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
No work begun shall ever pause for death
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I' the coming course, the new path I must 54
tread —
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong
for that!
Tell him that if I seem without him now,
That's the world's insight! Oh, he under-
stands!
He is at Civita — do I once doubt
The world again is holding us apart?
He had been here, displayed in my behalf
The broad brow that reverberates the
truth,
And flashed the word God gave him, back
to man!
I know where the free soul is flown! My
fate
Will have been hard for even him to bear: 63
Let it confirm him in the trust of God,
Showing how holily he dared the deed!
And, for the rest, — say, from the deed, no
touch
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,
Not one faint fleck of failure! Why ex-
plain?
What I see, oh, he sees and how much
more!
Tell him, — I know not wherefore the
true word
Should fade and fall unuttered at the
last —
It was the name of him I sprang to meet
When came the knock, the summons and 70
the end.
"My great heart, my strong hand are back
again!"
I would have sprung to these, beckoning
across
Murder and hell gigantic and distinct
O' the threshold, posted to exclude me
heaven:
He is ordained to call and I to come!
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed
for God?
Say, — I am all in flowers from head to
foot!
Say, — not one flower of all he said and
did,
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade un-
known,
But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam- 84
tree
Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place
At this supreme of moments! He is a
priest;
He cannot marry therefore, which is right:
I think he would not marry if he could.
Marriage on earth seems such a counter-
feit,

Mere imitation of the inimitable:

In heaven we have the real and true and sure.

'Tis there they neither marry nor are given
In marriage but are as the angels: right,
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ
To say that! Marriage-making for the
earth,

With gold so much, — birth, power, repute
so much,

Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,

12 Know themselves into one, are found at
length

Married, but marry never, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at
once

When the true time is: here we have to
wait

Not so long neither! Could we by a wish
Have what we will and get the future now,
Would we wish aught done undone in the
past?

So, let him wait God's instant men call
years;

Meantime hold hard by truth and his great
soul,

Do out the duty! Through such souls
alone

20 God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

VIII.—DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE ARCHANGELIS,

PAUPERUM PROCURATOR.¹

[This Book is so full of Latin, and the
humour of it turns so much upon Latin
phrases, as had better to repay the trouble of
reading to any one not acquainted with that
language. Under these circumstances, it
would seem to be merely cumbrous and in-
effective to give a translation throughout.]

Ah, my Giacinto, he's no ruddy rogue,
Is not Cinone?² What, to-day we're
eight?

Seven and one's eight, I hope, old curly-
pate!

— Branches me out his verb-tree on the
slate,

Amo —as —avi —atum —are —ans,
Up to —aturus, person, tense, and mood,
Quies me cum subjunctivo (I could cry)

¹ *Pauperum Procurator*: the official defender
of criminals, as the "Fisc" is the official prose-
cutor.

² *Cinone*: a pet diminutive of Giacinto, as
are Cinozzo, Cinoncello, Cinino, and various
other forms occurring in this Book.

And chews Corderius³ with his morning
crust!

Look eight years onward, and he's perched, 30
he's perched

Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair,
Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he?

— Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty
case

Like this, papa shall triturate full soon
To smooth Papinianian⁴ pulp!

It trots
Already through my head, though noon

be now,
Does supper-time and what belongs to

eve.
Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work then

play!
— The proverb bids. And "then" means,

won't we hold
Our little yearly lovesome frolic feast, 40

Cinuolo's birth-night, Cinicello's own,
That makes gruff January grin perforce!

For too contagious grows the mirth, the
warmth

Escaping from so many hearts at once —
When the good wife, buxom and bonny

yet,
Jokes the hale grandsire, — such are just

the sort
To go off suddenly, — he who hides the

key
O' the box beneath his pillow every night —
Which box may hold a parchment (someone

thinks)
Will show a scribbled something like a 50

name
"Cinino, Ciniccino," near the end,

"To whom I give and I bequeath my lands,
"Estates, tenements, hereditaments,

"When I decease as honest grandsire
ought."

Wherefore — yet this one time again per-
haps —

Shan't my Orvieto fuddle his old nose!
Then, uncles, one or the other, well i' the

world,
May — drop in, merely? — trudge through

rain and wind,
Rather! The smell-feasts rouse them at

the hint
There's cookery in a certain dwelling-place 60

Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his
poke,

Will pick the way, thrird lane by lantern-
light,

And so find door, put galligaskin off
At entry of a decent domicile

³ *Corderius*: Mathurin Cordier, author of the
most popular Latin school-book of the sixteenth
century, the *Colloquia Scholastica*.

⁴ *Papinianian*: from Papinius, a Roman
jurist of the beginning of the third century.

Cornered in snug Condotti, — all for love,
All to crush cup with Cinucciatolo!

Well,

Let others climb the heights o' the court,
the camp!

How vain are chambering and wantonness,
Revel and rout and pleasures that make
mad!

Commend me to home-joy, the family
board,

Altar and hearth! These, with a brisk
career,

A source of honest profit and good fame,
Just so much work as keeps the brain from
rust,

10 Just so much play as lets the heart expand,
Honouring God and serving man, — I say,
These are reality, and all else, — fluff,
Nutshell and naught, — thank Flaccus¹
for the phrase!

Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor!
Why, work with a will, then! Wherefore
lazy now?

Turn up the hour-glass, whence no sand-
grain slips

But should have done its duty to the saint
O' the day, the son and heir that's eight
years old!

20 Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,
And Latin duple Cinarello's chin,
The while we spread him fine and toss him
flat

This pulp that makes the pancake, trim
our mass

Of matter into Argument the First,
Prime Pleading in defence of our accused,
Which, once a-waft on paper wing, shall
soar,

Shall signalise before applausive Rome
What study, and mayhap some mother-wit,
Can do toward making Master fop and
Fisc

Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.

30 Now, how good God is! How falls plumb
to point

This murder, gives me Guido to defend
Now, of all days i' the year, just when the
boy

Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
For some such illustration from his sire,
Stimulus to himself! One might wait
years

And never find the chance which now finds
me!

The fact is, there's a blessing on the hearth,
A special providence for fatherhood!
Here's a man, and what's more, a noble,
kills

40 — Not sneakingly but almost with
parade—

¹ Flaccus: Horace, *Sat.* II, 5, 35, *quassa*
nuce, a proverbial expression for something
worthless.

Wife's father and wife's mother and wife's
self

That's mother's self of son and heir (like
mine!)

— And here stand I, the favoured advo-
cate,

Who pluck this flower o' the field, no
Solomon

Was ever clothed in glorious gold to match,
And set the same in Cinoncino's cap!

I defend Guido and his comrades — I!
Pray God, I keep me humble: not to me —

Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus!

How the fop chuckled when they made 50
him Fisc!

We'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for love,
All for our tribute to Cinotto's day.

Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent himself
May rub his eyes at the bustle, — ask

"What's this

"Rolling from out the rostrum, as a gust
"O' the *Pro Milone*² had been prisoned
there,

"And rattled Rome awake?" Awaken
Rome,

How can the Pope doze on in decency?
He needs must wake up also, speak his
word,

Have his opinion like the rest of Rome, 60
About this huge, this hurly-burly case:

He wants who can excogitate the truth,
Give the result in speech, plain black and
white,

To mumble in the mouth and make his
own

— A little changed, good man, a little
changed!

No matter, so his gratitude be moved,
By when my Giacintino gets of age,
Mindful of who thus helped him at a pinch,
Archangelus *Procurator Pauperum* —
And proved Hortensius³ *Redivivus!* 70

Whew!
To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced herb
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,
With here a goose-foot, there a cock's-
comb stuck,

Cemented in an element of cheese!

I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good:

Last June he had a sort of strangling . . .
bah!

He's his own master, and his will is made.
So—liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly

As we rub hands o'er dish by way of
grace!

May I lose cause if I vent one word more 80

Except, — with fresh-cut quill we ink the
white, —

P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis. There!

² *Pro Milone*: Cicero's great speech in defence
of Milo on a charge of murder.

³ *Hortensius*: the great Roman orator, con-
temporary with Cicero.

Count Guido married — or, in Latin due,
What? *Duxit in uxorem?* — common-
place!

Tædas jugales iniit, subiit, — ha!

He underwent the matrimonial torch?

Connubio stabili sibi iunxit, — hum!

In stable bond of marriage bound his own?

That's clear of any modern taint: and
yet . . .

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.

He shall attack me Terence with the dawn,
10 Shall Cinuccino! Mum, mind business,
Sir!

Thus circumstantially evolve we facts,

Ita se habet ideo series facti:

He wedded, — ah, with owls for augury!

Nupserat, heu sinistris avibus,

One of the blood Arezzo boasts her best,

Dominus Guido, nobili genere ortus,

Pompilia . . .

But the version afterward!

Curb we this ardour! Notes alone, to-day,

The speech to-morrow and the Latin last:

20 Such was the rule in Farinacci's time.

Indeed I hitched it into verse and good.

Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,

Or else I think I too had poetised.

"Law is the pork substratum of the fry,

"Goose-foot and cock's-comb are Latin-
ity," —

And in this case, if circumstance assist,

We'll garnish law with idiom, never fear!

Out-of-the-way events extend our scope:

For instance, when Bottini brings his
charge,

30 "That letter which you say Pompilia
wrote, —

"To criminate her parents and herself

"And disengage her husband from the
coil, —

"That, Guido Franceschini wrote, say we:

"Because Pompilia could nor read nor
write,

"Therefore he pencilled her such letter first,

"Then made her trace in ink the same
again."

-- Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip?

How will he turn this and break Tully's
pate?

"*Existimandum*" (don't I hear the dog!)

40 "*Quod Guido designaverit elementa*"

"*Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint*

"(*Superinducto ab ea calamo*)

"*Notato atramento*" — there's a style! —

"*Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat*." Boh!

Now, my turn! Either, *Insulse!* (I out-
burst)

Stupidly put! Inane is the response,

Inanis est responsio, or the like —

To-wit, that each of all those characters,
Quod singula elementa epistolæ,

Had first of all been traced for her by him, 50

Fuerant per eum prius designata,

And then, the ink applied atop of that,

Et deinde, superinducta calamo,

The piece, she says, became her handiwork,

Per eam, efformata, ut ipsa asserit.

Inane were such response! (a second time:)

Her husband outlined her the whole, for-
sooth?

Vir ejus lineabat epistolam?

What, she confesses that she wrote the
thing,

Faetur eam scripsisse, (scorn that scatches!) 60

That she might pay obedience to her lord?

Ut viro obtemperaret, apices

(Here repeat charge with proper varied
phrase)

Eo designante, ipsaque calamum

Super inducente? By such argument,

Ita pariter, she seeks to show the same,

(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what saints you
please)

Epistolam ostendit, medius fidius,

No voluntary deed but fruit of force!

Non voluntarie sed coacte scriptam! 70

That's the way to write Latin, friend my

Fisc!

Bottini is a beast, one barbarous:

Look out for him when he attempts to say

"Armed with a pistol, Guido followed her!"

Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,

Cut away phrase by phrase from under-
foot!

Guido Pompiliam — Guido thus his wife

Following with igneous engine, shall I have

Armis munitus igneis persequens —

Arma sulphurea gestans, sulphury arms, 80

Or, might one style a pistol — popping-
piece?

Armatus breviori sclopolo?

We'll let him have been armed so, though
it make

Somewhat against us: I had thought to
own —

Provided with a simple travelling-sword,

Ense solummodo viatorio

Instructus: but we'll grant the pistol here:

Better we lost the cause than lacked the
gird

At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh!

It's Venturini that decides for style. 90

Tommati rather goes upon the law.

So, as to law, —

Ah, but with law ne'er hope

To level the fellow, — don't I know his
trick!

How he draws up, ducks under, twists
aside!

He's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine

As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pre-
tends

'Tis ermine, pure soft snow from tail to
snout.

He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,
Lets Latin glance off as he makes appeal
To saint that's somewhere in the ceiling-
top:

Do you suppose I don't conceive the beast?
Plague of the ermine-vermin! For it
takes,

It takes, and here's the fellow Fisc, you see,
And Judge, you'll not be long in seeing
next!

Confound the fop — he's now at work like
me:

Enter his study, as I seem to do,
Hear him read out his writing to himself!
I know he writes as if he spoke: I hear
The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes,
neck shot-forth,

— I see him strain on tiptoe, soar and pour
Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at all —
Perorate in the air, then quick to press
With the product! What abuse of type
and sheet!

He'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-throw,
Let argument slide, and then deliver swift
Some bowl from quite an unguessed point
of stand —

Having the luck o' the last word, the reply!
A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke:
You face a fellow — cries "So, there you
stand?"

'But I discourteous jump clean o'er your
head!

"You take ship-carpentry for pilotage,
"Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps through
the breach, —

"Hammer and fortify at puny points?
"Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight and
safe!

"'Tis here and here and here you ship a
sea,

"No good of your stopped leaks and little-
ness!"

Yet what do I name "little and a leak"?
The main defence o' the murder's used to
death,

By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap we
pick:

Safer I worked the new, the unforeseen,
The nice by-stroke, the fine and improv-
vised

Point that can titillate the brain o' the
Bench

Torpid with over-teaching, long ago!
As if Tommati (that has heard, reheard
And heard again, first this side and then
that —

Guido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido, din
And deafen, full three years, at each long
ear)

Don't want amusement for instruction
now,

Won't rather feel a flea run o'er his ribs,

Than a daw settle heavily on his head!
Oh I was young and had the trick of fence,
Knew subtle pass and push with careless
right —

My left arm ever quiet behind back,
With dagger ready: not both hands to
blade!

Puff and blow, put the strength out, Blun-
derbore!

There's my subordinate, young Spreti, now
Pedant and prig, — he'll pant away a 50
proof,

That's his way!

Now for mine — to rub some life
Into one's choppy fingers this cold day!

I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards
The precious throat on which so much
depends!

Guido must be all goose-flesh in his hole,
Despite the prison-straw: bad Carnival
For captives! no sliced fry for him, poor
Count!

Carnival-time, — another providence!

The town a-swarm with strangers to amuse,
To edify, to give one's name and fame 60

In charge of, till they find, some future day,
Cintino come and claim it, his name too,
Pledge of the pleasantness they owe papa —
Who else was it cured Rome of her great
qualms,

When she must needs have her own judg-
ment? — ay,

When all her topping wits had set to work,
Pronounced already on the case: mere
boys,

Twice Cineruggiolo's age with half his
sense,

As good as tell me, when I cross the court,
"Master Arcangeli!" (plucking at my 70
gown)

"We can predict we comprehend your play,
"We'll help you save your client." Tra-
la-la!

I've travelled ground, from childhood to
this hour,

To have the town anticipate my track?
The old fox takes the plain and velvet
path,

The young hound's predilection, — prints
the dew,

Don't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw?
No! Burying nose deep down i' the briery
bush,

Thus I defend Count Guido.

Where are we weak?
First, which is foremost in advantage too, 80
Our murder, — we call, killing, — is a
fact

Confessed, defended, made a boast of:
good!

To think the Fisc claimed use of torture
here,

And got thereby avowal plump and plain
That gives me just the chance I wanted, —
scope

Not for brute-force but ingenuity,
Explaining matters, not denying them!
One may dispute, — as I am bound to do,
And shall, — validity of process here:
Inasmuch as a noble is exempt
From torture which plebeians undergo
In such a case: for law is lenient, lax,

- 10 Remits the torture to a nobleman
Unless suspicion be of twice the strength
Attaches to a man born vulgarly:
We don't card silk with comb that dresses
wool.

Moreover 'twas severity undue
In this case, even had the lord been loud.
What utters, on this head, our oracle,
Our Farinacci,¹ my Gamaliel erst,
In those immortal "Questions"? This I
quote:

- "Of all the tools at Law's disposal, sure
20 "That named *Vigiliarum* is the best —
"That is, the worst — to whoso needs
must bear:

"Lasting, as it may do, from some seven
hours

"To ten; (beyond ten, we've no prece-
dent;

"Certain have touched their ten, but, bah,
they died!")

"It does so efficaciously convince,
"That, — speaking by much observation
here, —

"Out of each hundred cases, by my count,
"Never I knew of patients beyond four

- "Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six
30 "End by succumbing: only martyrs four,
"Of obstinate silence, guilty or no, —
against

"Ninety-six full confessors, innocent
"Or otherwise, — so shrewd a tool have
we!"

No marvel either: in unwary hands,
Death on the spot is no rare consequence:
As indeed all but happened in this case
To one of ourselves, our young tough
peasant-friend

The accomplice called Baldeschi: they
were rough,

Dosed him with torture as you drench a
horse,

- 40 Not modify your treatment to a man:
So, two successive days he fainted dead,
And only on the third essay, gave up,
Confessed like flesh and blood. We could
reclaim, —

¹ *Farinacci*: Prosper Farinacci (1544-1613),
author of a volume of *Varia Quaestiones* and
other legal treatises, which were regarded as of
very high authority during the seventeenth cen-
tury. In 1590 he defended Beatrice Cenci on the
charge of murdering her father,

Blockhead Bottini giving cause enough!
But no, — we'll take it as spontaneously
Confessed: we'll have the murder beyond
doubt.

Ah, fortunate (the poet's word² reversed)
Inasmuch as we know our happiness!

Had the antagonist left dubiety,
Here were we proving murder a mere myth, 50
And Guido innocent, ignorant, absent, —
ay,

Absent! He was — why, where should
Christian be? —

Engaged in visiting his proper church,
The duty of us all at Christmas-time,

When Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung
To madness by his relegation, cast

About him and contrived a remedy
In murder: since opprobrium broke

afresh,
By birth o' the babe, on him the imputed

sire,
He it was quietly sought to smother up 60
His shame and theirs together, — killed

the three,
And fled — (go seek him where you please
to search) —

Just at the time when Guido, touched by
grace,

Devotions ended, hastened to the spot,
Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,

"Neither do I condemn thee, go in
peace!" —

And thus arrived i' the nick of time to
catch

The charge o' the killing, though great-
heartedly

He came but to forgive and bring to life.
Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the 70
soul?

"Is thine eye evil because mine is good?"

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here
But for the full confession round and

sound!
Thus might you wrong some kingly al-
chemist, —

Whose concern should not be with show-
ing brass

Transmuted into gold, but triumphing,
Rather, about his gold changed out of

brass,
Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,

But in the idea, the spiritual display,
The apparition buoyed by winged words 80
Hovering above its birth-place in the

brain, —
Thus would you wrong this excellent per-
sonage

Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron
round,

² *The poet's word*: "O fortunatos nimium,
sua si bona norint, Agricolas" (Virgil, *Georg.*
II. 458).

Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows, — in a word,
 Demonstrate: when a faulty pipkin's crack
 May disconcert you his presumptive truth! Here were I hanging to the testimony
 Of one of these poor rustics — four, ye gods!
 Whom the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord
 May drive into undoing my whole speech,
 Undoing, on his birthday, — what is worse, —
 My son and heir!

I wonder, all the same,
 10 Not so much at those peasants' lack of heart;
 But — Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
 Bear pain no better! Everybody knows
 It used once, when my father was a boy,
 To form a proper, nay, important point
 P' the education of our well-born youth,
 That they took torture handsomely at need,
 Without confessing in this clownish guise.
 Each noble had his rack for private use,
 And would, for the diversion of a guest,
 20 Bid it be set up in the yard of arms,
 And take thereon his hour of exercise, —
 Command the varletry stretch, strain their best,
 While friends looked on, admired my lord could smile
 'Mid tugging which had caused an ox to roar.
 Men are no longer men!

— And advocates

No longer Farinacci, let us add,
 If I one more time fly from point proposed!
 So, *Vindicatio*, — here begins the speech!
Honoris causa; thus we make our stand:
 30 Honour in us had injury, we prove.
 Or if we fail to prove such injury
 More than misprision of the fact, — what then?

It is enough, authorities declare,
 If the result, the deed in question now,
 Be caused by confidence that injury
 Is veritable and no figment: since,
 What, though proved fancy afterward,
 Seemed fact
 At the time, they argue shall excuse result.
 That which we do, persuaded of good cause
 40 For what we do, hold justifiable! —
 So casuists bid: man, bound to do his best,
 They would not have him leave that best undone
 And mean to do his worst, — though fuller light
 Show best was worst and worst would have been best.

Act by the present light! — they ask of man.

Ultra quod hic non agitur, besides
 It is not anyway our business here,
De probatione adulterii,
 To prove what we thought crime was crime indeed,
Ad irrogandam penam, and require 50
 Its punishment: such nowise do we seek:
Sed ad effectum, but 'tis our concern,
Excusandi, here to simply find excuse,
Occidore, for who did the killing-work,
Et ad illius defensionem, (mark
 The difference) and defend the man, just that!

Quo casu levior probatio
Exuberaret, to which end far lighter proof
 Suffices than the prior case would claim:
 It should be always harder to convict, 60
 In short, than to establish innocence.
 Therefore we shall demonstrate first of all
 That Honour is a gift of God to man
 Precious beyond compare: which natural sense
 Of human rectitude and purity, —
 Which white, man's soul is born with, —
 brooks no touch:
 Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,
 Wounded by any wafture breathed from black,
 Is, — honour within honour, like the eye
 Centred i' the ball, — the honour of our 70
 wife.

Touch us o' the pupil of our honour, then,
 Not actually, — since so you slay outright, —

But by a gesture simulating touch,
 Presumable mere menace of such taint, —
 This were our warrant for eruptive ire
 "To whose dominion I impose no end."

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult
 To Cinoncinio, — say, the early books.
 Pen, truce to further gambols! *Pesci-
 mur!*)

Nor can revenge of injury done here 80
 To the honour proved the life and soul of us,

Be too excessive, too extravagant:
 Such wrong seeks and must have complete revenge.

Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground:

Begin at the beginning, and proceed
 Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,²
 In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,
 Propounds for basis of all household law —
 I hardly recollect it, but it ends,

¹ *To whose dominion*, &c.: "His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; Imperium sine fine dedi" (Virgil, *Æn.* I. 278, 279).

² *Theodoric*: the Goth, king of Italy, 493
 526. Cassiodorus was his secretary.

"Bird mates with bird, beast genders
with his like,
'And brooks no interference." Bird and
beast?

The very insects . . . if they wive or no,
How dare I say when Aristotle doubts?
But the presumption is they likewise wive,
At least the nobler sorts; for take the bee
As instance, — copying King Solomon, —
Why that displeasure of the bee to aught
Which savours of incontinency, makes

10 The unchaste a very horror to the hive?
Whence comes it bees obtain their epithet
Of *castæ apes*, notably "the chaste"?
Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,
(The young sage, — see his book of Table-
talk)

"Such is their hatred of immodest act,
"They fall upon the offender, sting to
death."

I mind a passage much confirmative
I' the Idyllist (though I read him Latin-
ised)

"Why," asks a shepherd, "is this bank
unfit

20 "For celebration of our vernal loves?"

"Oh swain," returns the instructed shep-
herdess,

"Bees swarm here, and would quick resent
our warmth!"

Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,
Nor gain nor guard connubiality:

But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,
Do credit to their beasthood: witness him
That Ælian¹ cites, the noble elephant,
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)

30 Who seeing, much offence beneath his nose,
His master's friend exceed in courtesy
The due allowance to his master's wife,
Taught them good manners and killed
both at once,

Making his master and the world admire.
Indubitably, then, that master's self,
Favoured by circumstance, had done the
same

Or else stood clear rebuked by his own
beast.

Adeo, ut qui honorem pernit, thus,
Who values his own honour not a straw, —
Et non recuperare curat, nor

40 Labours by might and main to salve its
wound,

Se ulciscendo, by revenging him,
Nil differat a belluis, is a brute,
Quinimo irrationabilior
Ipsismet belluis, nay, contrariwise,
Much more irrational than brutes them-
selves,

Should be considered, *reputetur*! How?
If a poor animal feel honour smart,
Taught by blind instinct nature plants in
him,

Shall man, — confessed creation's mas-
ter-stroke,

Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god, 51
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here, —
Shall man prove the insensible, the block,
The blot of the earth he crawls on to dis-
grace?

(Come, that's both solid and poetic!) Man
Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,
Mean creeping cares about the animal life?
Absit such homage to vile flesh and blood!

(May Gigia have remembered, nothing
stings

Fried liver out of its monotony
Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped 60
Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I
said —

Was there need I should say "and fennel
too"?

But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!
To our argument! The fennel will be
chopped.)

From beast to man next mount we — ay,
but, mind,

Still mere man, not yet Christian, — that,
in time!

Not too fast, mark you! 'Tis on Heathen
grounds

We next defend our act: then, fairly
urge —

If this were done of old, in a green tree,
Allowed in the Spring rawness of our kind, 70
What may be licensed in the Autumn dry
And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of man?
If, with his poor and primitive half-lights,
The Pagan, whom our devils served for
gods,

Could stigmatise the breach of marriage-
vow

As that which blood, blood only might
efface, —

Absolve the husband, outraged, whose
revenge

Anticipated law, plied sword himself, —
How with the Christian in full blaze of
noon?

Shall not he rather double penalty, 81
Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,

Let privilege he minished, droop, decay?
Therefore set forth at large the ancient law!
Superabundant the examples be

To pick and choose from. The Athe-
nian Code,

Solon's, the name is serviceable, — then,
The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that fif-
teenth, —

"Romulus" likewise rolls out round and
large;

The Julian; the Cornelian;² Gracchus'
Law:

¹ Ælian: in his *De Nat. Anim.* XI. 15.

² The Julian; the Cornelian: see Book I.
p. 11. 46. 47.

So old a chime, the bells ring of themselves !
 Spreti can set that going if he please,
 I point you, for my part, the belfry plain,
 Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,
 Into the Christian day shall broaden next.

First, the fit compliment to His Holiness
 Happily reigning: then sustain the point —
 All that was long ago declared as law
 By the natural revelation, stands con-
 firmed

10 By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint, —
 To-wit — that Honour is man's supreme
 good.

Why should I baulk Saint Jerome of his
 phrase?

Ubi honor non est, where no honour is,
Ibi contemptus est; and where contempt,
Ibi injuria frequens; and where that,
 The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio*;
 And where the indignation, *ibi quies*
Nulla: and where there is no quietude,
 Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast
 20 Down from the heights where it proposed
 to dwell,

Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.
 And naturally the mind is so cast down,
 Since harder 'tis, *quum difficilius sit*,
Iram cohibere, to coerce one's wrath,
Quam miracula facere, than work mir-
 acles, —

So Gregory smiles in his First Dialogue.
 Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul, the
 man

Who makes esteem of honour and repute,
 Whenever honour and repute are touched,
 30 Arrives at term of fury and despair,
 Loses all guidance from the reason-
 check:

As in delirium or a frenzy-fit,
 Nor fury nor despair he satiates, — no,
 Not even if he attain the impossible,
 O'erturn the hinges of the universe
 To annihilate — not whoso caused the
 smart

Solely, the author simply of his pain,
 But the place, the memory, *vituperii*,
 O' the shame and scorn: *quia*, — says
 Solomon,

40 (The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth
 In Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the
 end)

— Because, the zeal and fury of a man,
Zelus et juror viri, will not spare,
Non parcat, in the day of his revenge,
In die vindictæ, nor will acquiesce,
Nec acquiescet, through a person's prayers,
Cujuslam precibus, — *nec suscipiet*,
 Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for
 Redemption, *dona plurium*, gifts of friends,
 50 Mere money-payment to compound for
 ache.

Who recognises not my client's case?
 Whereto, as strangely consentaneous here,

Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle writ
 To Robertulus, his nephew: "Too much
 grief,

"*Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat*,

"Does not excogitate propriety,

"*Non verecundatur*, nor knows shame at
 all,

"*Non consulit rationem*, nor consults

"Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*

"*Damnum*, nor dreads the loss of dignity; 60

"*Modum et ordinem*, order and the mode,

"*Ignorat*, it ignores:" why, trait for trait,

Was ever portrait limned so like the life?

(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say?

I hear he's first in reputation now.)

Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred Text

That's not so much the portrait as the man!

Samson in Gaza was the antetype

Of Guido at Rome: observe the Nazarite!

Blinded he was, — an easy thing to bear: 70

Intrepidly he took imprisonment,

Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the mill:

But when he found himself, i' the public

place,

Destined to make the common people

sport,

Disdain burned up with such an impetus

I' the breast of him that, all the man one

fire,

Moriatur, roared he, let my soul's self die,

Anima mea, with the Philistines!

Sp, pulled down pillar, roof, and death

and all,

Multosque plures interfecit, ay, 80

And many more he killed thus, *moriens*,

Dying, *quam vivus*, than in his whole life,

Occiderat, he ever killed before.

Are these things writ for no example, Sirs?

One instance more, and let me see who

doubts!

Our Lord Himself, made all of mansue-

tude,

Sealing the sum of sufferance up, received

Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting

Without complaint: but when He found

Himself

Touched in His honour never so little for 90

once,

Then outbroke indignation pent be-

fore —

"*Honorem meum nemini dabo!*" "No,

"My honour I to nobody will give!"

And certainly the example so hath wrought,

That whosoever, at the proper worth,

Apprises worldly honour and repute,

Esteems it nobler to die honoured man

Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries

Disgraced in the eye o' the world. We

find Saint Paul

No recreant to this faith delivered once: 100

"Far worthier were it that I died," cries

he,

Expediit mihi magis mori, "than

"That anyone should make my glory void,"

Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet!

See, *ad Corinthenses*: whereupon Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit,

Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,

So I desist from bringing forward here. (I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved

Satis superque, both enough and to spare, That Revelation old and new admits

10 The natural man may effervesce in ire, O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with foamy rage,

At the first puncture to his self-respect?

Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this law-bud

Full-blown now, soon to bask the absolute flower

Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day, — Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-streak,

One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular, One dew-drop comfort to humanity, Now that the chalice teems with noonday wine?

20 Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge — Referring just to what makes out our case! Under old dispensation, argue they, The doom of the adulterous wife was death, Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,

"Put her away!" next legislates our Lord; And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a wife!" Ordains the Church, "she typifies ourself, "The Bride no fault shall cause to fall from Christ."

Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law

30 Has passed away — which who presumes to doubt?

As not one word of Christ is rendered vain —

Which, could it be though heaven and earth should pass?

— Where do I find my proper punishment For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask Of my infallible Pope, — who now remits Even the divorce allowed by Christ in lieu Of lapidation Moses licensed me?

The Gospel checks the Law which throws the stone,

The Church tears the divorce-bill Gospel grants:

40 Shall wives sin and enjoy impunity?

What profits me the fulness of the days, The final dispensation, I demand, Unless Law, Gospel and the Church sub-join

"But who hath barred thee primitive revenge,

"Which, like fire damped and dammed up, burns more fierce?"

"Use thou thy natural privilege of man, "Else wery thou found like those old ingrate Jews,

"Despite the manna-banquet on the board,

"A-longing after melons, cucumbers,

"And such like trash of Egypt left behind!" 50

(There was one melon had improved our soup:

But did not Cinoncino need the rind To make a boat with? So I seem to think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church — from these we leap

To the very last revelation, easy rule Befitting the well-born and thorough-bred O' the happy day we live in, not the dark O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.

"Behold," quoth James, "we bridle in a horse

"And turn his body as we would thereby!" 60

Yea, but we change the bit to suit the growth, And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged spike

We hasten to remit our managed steed Who wheels round at persuasion of a touch. Civilisation bows to decency, The acknowledged use and wont: 'tis manners, — mild

But yet imperative law, — which make the man.

Thus do we pay the proper compliment To rank, and that society of Rome, Hath so obliged us by its interest, Taken our client's part instinctively, As unaware defending its own cause.

What *dictum* doth Society lay down I' the case of one who hath a faithless wife? Wherewithal should the husband cleanse his way?

Be patient and forgive? Oh, language fails, —

Shrinks from depicting his turpitude! For if wronged husband raise not hue and cry,

Quod si maritus de adulterio non Conqueretur, he's presumed a — foh! 80

Presumitur leno: so, complain he must. But how complain? At your tribunal, lords?

Far weightier challenge suits your sense, I wot!

You sit not to have gentlemen propose Questions gentility can itself discuss.

Did not you prove that to our brother Paul?

The Abate, *quum judicialiter Prosequeretur*, when he tried the law,

Guidonis causam, in Count Guido's case,
Accidit ipsi, this befell himself,
Quod risum moverit et cachinnos, that
 He moved to mirth and cachinnation, all
 Or nearly all, *jere in omnibus*
Etiā sensatis et cordatis, men
 Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the
 very Court,

Ipsimet in iudiciis, I might add,
Non tamen dicam. In a cause like this,
 So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*,
 Delicate, intertwined and obscure,
 That Law refused loan of a finger-tip
 To unravel, readjust the hopeless twine,
 Since, half-a-dozen steps outside Law's
 seat,

There stood a foolish trifler with a tool
 A-dangle to no purpose by his side,
 Had clearly cut the embroilment in a trice.
Asserunt enim unanimiter
Doctores, for the Doctors all assert,
 So That husbands, *quod mariti*, must be held
Viles, cornuti repulantur, vile,
 Fronts branching forth a florid infamy,
Si propriis manibus, if with their own
 hands,

Non sumunt, they fail straight to take
 revenge,

Vindictam, but expect the deed be done
 By the Court — *expectant illam feri*
Per iudices, qui summopere vident, which
 Gives an enormous guffaw for reply,
Et cachinnantur. For he ran away,

Deliquit enim, just that he might 'scape
 The censure of both counsellors and crowd,

Ut vulgi et doctorum evitaret
Censuram, and lest so he superadd
 To loss of honour ignominy too,
Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam
Amissio honori superadderet.

My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate step
 Was — we referred ourselves to Law at all!
 Twit me not with "Law else had punished
 you!"

So Each punishment of the extra-legal step,
 To which the high-born preferably revert,
 Is ever for some oversight, some slip
 I' the taking vengeance, not for ven-
 geance' self.

A good thing, done unhandsomely, turns
 ill;

And never yet lacked ill the law's rebuke.
 For pregnant instance, let us contemplate
 The luck of Leonardus, — see at large
 Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.

This Leonard finds his wife is false: what
 then?

50 He makes her own son snare her, and en-
 tice

Out of the town walls to a private walk
 Wherein he slays her with commodity.
 They find her body half-devoured by dogs:
 Leonard is tried, convicted, punished, sent
 To labour in the galleys seven years long:

Why? For the murder? Nay, but for
 the mode!

Malus modus occidendi, ruled the Court,
 An ugly mode of killing, nothing more!
 Another fructuous sample, — see "*De Re*
 "*Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine piece. 60

Another husband, in no better plight,
 Simulates absence, thereby tempts his wife;
 On whom he falls, out of sly ambuscade,
 Backed by a brother of his, and both of
 them

Armed to the teeth with arms that law had
 blamed.

Nimis dolose, overwily,
Fuisse operatum, did they work,
 Pronounced the law: had all been fairly
 done

Law had not found him worthy, as she did,
 Of four years' exile. Why cite more? 70
 Enough

Is good as a feast — (unless a birthday-
 feast

For one's Cinuccio) so, we finish here.
 My lords, we rather need defend our-
 selves

Inasmuch as, for a twinkling of an eye,
 We hesitatingly appealed to law, —
 Than need deny that, on mature advice,
 We blushing bethought us, bade re-
 venge

Back to its simple proper private way
 Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.
 Judges, here is the law, and here beside, 80
 The testimony! Look to it!

Pause and breathe!
 So far is only too plain; we must watch:
 Bottini will scarce hazard an attack
 Here: best anticipate the fellow's play,
 And guard the weaker places — warily
 ask,

What if considerations of a sort,
 Reasons of a kind, arise from out the
 strange

Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance
 Of this our (candour owns) abnormal act,
 To bar the right of us revenging so? 90
 "Impunity were otherwise your meed:

"Go slay your wife and welcome," —
 may be urged, —

"But why the innocent old couple slay,
 "Pietro, Violante? You may do enough,
 "Not too much, not exceed the golden
 mean:

"Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gentile,
 Jew,

"Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the
 mode,

"Is justified to push revenge so far."

No, indeed? Why, thou very sciolist!
 The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to 100
 do,

Was virtual wrong done by the parents
 here —

Imposing her upon us as their child —
Themselves allow: then, her fault was
their fault,

Her punishment be theirs accordingly!
But wait a little, sneak not off so soon!
Was this cheat solely harm to Guido,
pray?

The precious couple you call innocent, —
Why, they were felons that Law failed
to clutch,

Qui ut fraudarent, who that they might
rob,

Legitime vocatos, folk law called,

20 *Ad fidei commissum*, true heirs to the
Trust,

Partum supposuerunt, feigned this birth,
Immemores reos factos esse, blind

To the fact that, guilty, they incurred
thereby,

Ultimi supplicii, hanging or what's worse.
Do you blame us that we turn Law's
instruments,

Not mere self-seekers, — mind the public
weal,

Nor make the private good our sole concern?

That having — shall I say — secured a
thief,

Not simply we recover from his pouch

20 The stolen article our property,
But also pounce upon our neighbour's
purse

We opportunely find reposing there,
And do him justice while we right our-
selves?

He owes us, for our part, a drubbing say,
But owes our neighbour just a dance i' the
air

Under the gallows: so, we throttle him.

That neighbour's Law, that couple are the
Thief,

We are the over ready to help Law —

Zeal of her house hath eaten us up: for
which,

30 Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,
Crudum Priamum,¹ devour poor Priam
raw,

('Twas Jupiter's own joke) with babes to
boot,

Priamique pisinnos, in Homeric phrase?
Shame! — and so ends my period prettily.

But even, — prove the pair not culpable,
Free as unborn babe from connivance at,

Participation in, their daughter's fault:
Ours the mistake. Is that a rare event?

Non semel, it is anything but rare,

10 *In contingentia facti*, that by chance,

Impunes evaserunt, go scot-free,
Qui, such well-meaning people as our-
selves,

Iusto dolore moti, who aggrieved
With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay
Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong
heads.

Cite me an illustrative case in point:

Mulier Smirnea quædam, good my lords,
A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once,
Virum et filium ex eo conceptum, who
Both husband and her son begot by him
Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,
5 *Vir filium suum perdidit*, her spouse
Had been beforehand with her, killed her
son,

Matrimonii primi, of a previous bed.

Deinde accusata, then accused,

Apud Dolabellam, before him that sat

Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*

Contaminatam liberare, nor

To liberate a woman doubly-dyed

With murder, *voluit*, made he up his mind, 6

Nec condemnare, nor to doom to death,

Iusto dolore impulsam, one impelled

By just grief; *sed remisit*, but sent her up

Ad Areopagum, to the Hill of Mars,

Sapientissimorum judicium

Cælum, to that assembly of the sage

Paralleled only by my judges here;

Ubi, cognito de causa, where, the cause

Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave
reply,

Ut ipsa et accusator, that both sides 7

O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back
again,

Post centum annos, after a hundred years,

For judgment; *et sic*, by which sage decree,

Duplici parricidio rea, one

Convicted of a double parricide,

Quamvis etiam innocentem, though in
truth

Out of the pair, one innocent at least

She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,

Undequaque, yet she altogether 'scaped,

Evasit impunis. See the case at length 8

In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,

That eighth book of his Memorable Facts.

Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark:

Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat,

Just so, a lady who had taken care,

Homicidium viri, that her lord be killed,

Ex denegatione debiti,

For denegation of a certain debt,

Matrimonialis, he was loth to pay,

Fuit pecuniaria multa, was

Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,

Punita, et ad penam, and to pains,

Temporalem, for a certain space of time,

In monasterio, in a convent.

(Ay,

In monasterio! He mismanages

¹ *Crudum Priamum* . . . *Priamique pisinnos*: a line from a translation of Homer by Attius Labeo. The translation as a whole is lost, but this line (*Il.* IV. 35) is preserved by a scholiast on Persius.

In with the ablative, the accusative!
I had hoped to have hitched the villain
into verse
For a gift, this very day, a complete list
O' the prepositions each with proper case,
Telling a story, long was in my head.
"What prepositions take the accusative?
Ad to or at — *who saw the cat?* — down to
Ob, for, because of, *keep her claws off!*"
Tush!

Law in a man takes the whole liberty:
The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found it)

And now, sea widens and the coast is clear.
What of the dubious act you bade excuse?
Surely things broaden, brighten, till at
length
Remains — so far from act that needs de-
fence —

Apology to make for act delayed
One minute, let alone eight mortal months
Of hesitation! "Why procrastinate?"
(Out with it, my Bottinius, ease thyself!)
"Right, promptly done, is twice right:
right delayed

"Turns wrong. We grant you should
have killed your wife,

"But killed o' the moment, at the meeting
her

"In company with the priest: then did the
tongue

"O' the Brazen Head give licence, 'Time is
now!'

"Wait to make mind up? 'Time is past'
it peals.

"Friend, you are competent to mastery
"O' the passions that confessedly explain

"An outbreak: you allow an interval,
"And then break out as if time's clock
still clanged.

"You have forfeited your chance, and flat
you fall

"Into the commonplace category
"Of men bound to go softly all their days,
"Obeying Law."

Now, which way make response?
What was the answer Guido gave, himself?
— That so to argue came of ignorance

How honour bears a wound. "For,
wound," said he,

"My body, and the smart soon mends and
ends:

"While, wound my soul where honour
sits and rules,

"Longer the sufferance, stronger grows the
pain,

"Being *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first."

But try another tack, urge common sense
By way of contrast: say — Too true, my
lords!

We did demur, awhile did hesitate:
Since husband sure should let a scruple
speak

Ere he slay wife, — for his own safety,
lords!

Carpers abound in this misjudging world:
Moreover, there's a nicety in law

That seems to justify them should they
carp.

Suppose the source of injury a son, —
Father may slay such son yet run no risk:

Why graced with such a privilege? Be- 54
cause

A father so incensed with his own child,
Or must have reason, or believe he has:

Quia semper, seeing that in such event,
Presumitur, the law is bound suppose,

Quod capiat pater, that the sire must take,
Bonum consilium pro filio,

The best course as to what befits his boy,
Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere
love,

Amoris, and, *paterni*, fatherhood;
Quam confidentiam, which confidence, 62

Non habet, law declines to entertain,
De viro, of the husband: where finds he

An instinct that compels him love his wife?
Rather is he presumably her foe.

So, let him ponder long in this bad world
Ere do the simplest act of justice.

But

Again — and here we brush Bottini's
breast —

Object you, "See the danger of delay!
"Suppose a man murdered my friend last
month:

"Had I come up and killed him for his 70
pains

"In rage, I had done right, allows the
law:

"I meet him now and kill him in cold
blood,

"I do wrong, equally allows the law:
"Wherein do actions differ, yours and
mine?"

In plenitudine intellectus es?
Hast thy wits, Fisc? To take such
slayer's life,

Returns it life to thy slain friend at all?
Had he stolen ring instead of stabbing
friend, —

To-day, to-morrow or next century,
Meeting the thief, thy ring upon his 84
thumb,

Thou justifiably hadst wrung it thence:
So, couldst thou wrench thy friend's life
back again,

Though prisoned in the bosom of his foe.
Why, law would look complacent on thy
wrath.

Our case is, that the thing we lost, we
found:

The honour, we were robbed of eight
months since,

Being recoverable at any day
By death of the delinquent. Go thy ways!

Ere thou hast learned law, will be much
to do,
As said the gaby while he shod the goose.
Nay, if you urge me, interval was none!
From the inn to the villa — blank or else
a bar

Of adverse and contrarious incident
Solid between us and our just revenge!
What with the priest who flourishes his
blade,

The wife who like a fury flings at us,
The crowd — and then the capture, the
appeal

10 To Rome, the journey there, the jaunting
thence

To shelter at the House of Convertites,
The visits to the Villa, and so forth,
Where was one minute left us all this while
To put in execution that revenge
We planned o' the instant? — as it were,
plumped down

O' the spot, some eight months since,
which round sound egg,
Rome, more propitious than our nest,
should hatch!

Object not, "You reached Rome on
Christmas-eve,

20 "And, despite liberty to act at once,
"Waited a whole and indecorous week!"
Hath so the Molinism, the canker, lords,
Eaten to our bone? Is no religion left?
No care for aught held holy by the Church?
What, would you have us skip and miss
those Feasts

O' the Natal Time, must we go prosecute
Secular business on a sacred day?
Should not the merest charity expect,
Setting our poor concerns aside for once,
We hurried to the song matutinal

30 I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for the
Mass

The Cardinal that's Camerlengo¹ chaunts,
Then rushed on to the blessing of the
Hat

And Rapier, which the Pope sends to what
prince

Has done most detriment to the Infidel —
And thereby whetted courage if 'twere
blunt?

Meantime, allow we kept the house a
week,

Suppose not we were idle in our mew!
Picture us raging here and raving there —
"Money?" I need none. "Friends?"
The word is null.

40 "Restore the white was on that shield of
mine

"Borne at" . . . wherever might be
shield to bear.

"I see my grandsire, he who fought so well

¹ *Camerlengo*: the chamberlain of the Pope,
who ranks highest among the cardinals, and
presides during a vacancy in the Holy See.

"At" . . . here find out and put in time
and place,
Or else invent the fight his grandsire
fought:

"I see this! I see that!"

(See nothing else,
Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an hour!
What to the uncle, as I bid advance
The smoking dish? "Fry suits a tender
tooth!"

"Behoves we care a little for our kin —

"You, Sir, — who care so much for cousin-
ship

"As come to your poor loving nephew's
feast!"

He has the reversion of a long lease yet —
Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's
fry, I know!)

Here fall to be considered those same six
Qualities; what Bottini needs must call
So many aggravations of our crime,
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's
back.

We summarily might dispose of such
By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some
skit —

"So, since there's proved no crime to ag-
gravate,

"A fico for your aggravations, Fisc!"
No, — handle mischief rather, — play with
spells

Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh
the while

We show that did he rise we stand his
match!

Therefore, first aggravation: we made
up —

Over and above our simple murderous
selves —

A regular assemblage of armed men,
Coadunatio armatorum, — ay,
Unluckily it was the very judge

That sits in judgment on our cause to-day
Who passed the law as Governor of Rome:

"Four men armed," — though for lawful
purpose, mark!

Much more for an acknowledged crime, —
"shall die."

We five were armed to the teeth, meant
murder too?

Why, that's the very point that saves us,
Fisc!

Let me instruct you. Crime nor done nor
meant, —

You punish still who arm and congregate:
For wherefore use bad means to a good
end?

Crime being meant not done, — you pun-
ish still

The means to crime, whereon you haply
pounce,

Though accident have baulked them of effect.
 But crime not only compassed but complete,
 Meant and done too? Why, since you have the end,
 Be that your sole concern, nor mind those means
 No longer to the purpose! Murdered we?
 (— Which, that our luck was in the present case,
Quod contigisse in presenti casu,
 Is palpable, *manibus palpatum est* —)
 Make murder out against us, nothing else!
 Of many crimes committed with a view
 To one main crime, Law overlooks the less,
 Intent upon the large. Suppose a man
 Having in view commission of a theft,
 Climbs the town-wall: 'tis for the theft he hangs,
 In case he stands convicted of such theft:
 Law remits whipping, due to who clomb wall
 Through bravery or wantonness alone,
 Just to dislodge a daw's nest, plant a flag.
 So I interpret you the manly mind
 Of him about to judge both you and me, —
 Our Governor, who, being no Fisc, my Fisc,
 Cannot have blundered on ineptitude!
 Next aggravation, — that the arms themselves
 Were specially of such forbidden sort
 Through shape or length or breadth, as, prompt, Law plucks
 From single hand of solitary man,
 Making him pay the carriage with his life:
Delatio armorum, arms against the rule,
Contra formam constitutionis, of
 Pope Alexander's blessed memory.
 Such are the poignards with the double prong,
 Horn-like, when tines make bold the antlered buck,
 Each prong of brittle glass — wherewith to stab
 And break off short and so let fragment stick
 Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery:
 Such being the Genoese blade with hooked edge
 That did us service at the villa here.
Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,
 But, — let so rare a personage forgive, —
 Fisc, thy objection is a foppery!
 Thy charge runs that we killed three innocents:
 Killed, dost see? Then, if killed, what matter how?
 By stick or stone, by sword or dagger, tool
 Long or tool short, round or triangular —

Poor slain folk find small comfort in the choice!
 Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc!
 Nature cries out, "Take the first arms you find!"
*Furor ministrat arma:*¹ where's a stone?
*Unde mihi lapidem?*² where darts for me?
Unde sagittas? But subdue the bard 50
 And rationalise a little. Eight months since,
 Had we, or had we not, incurred your blame
 For letting 'scape unpunished this bad pair?
 I think I proved that in last paragraph!
 Why did we so? Because our courage failed.
 Wherefore? Through lack of arms to fight the foe:
 We had no arms or merely lawful ones,
 An unimportant sword and blunderbuss,
 Against a foe, pollent in potency,
 The *amasius*, and our vixen of a wife. 60
 Well then, how culpably do we gird loin
 And once more undertake the high emprise,
 Unless we load ourselves this second time
 With handsome superfluity of arms,
 Since better is "too much" than "not enough,"
 And "*plus non viliat*," too much does no harm,
 Except in mathematics, sages say.
 Gather instruction from the parable!
 At first we are advised — "A lad hath here
 "Seven barley loaves and two small 70
 fishes: what
 "Is that among so many?" Aptly asked:
 But put that question twice and, quite as apt,
 The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full!"
 And, while we speak of superabundance, fling
 We word by the way to fools who cast their flout
 On Guido — "Punishment were pardoned him,
 "But here the punishment exceeds offence:
 "He might be just, but he was cruel too!"
 Why, grant there seems a kind of cruelty
 In downright stabbing people he could 80
 maim,
 (If so you stigmatise the stern and strict)
 Still, Guido meant no cruelty — may plead
 Transgression of his mandate, over-zeal
 O' the part of his companions: all he craved

¹ *Furor arma ministrat*: Virgil, *Æn.* I. 150.
² *Unde mihi lapidem . . . unde sagittas*:
 Hora'e, *Sat.* II. 7, 116.

Was, they should fray the faces of the folk,
Merely disfigure, nowise make them die.
Solummodo jassus est, he owns no more,
Dedisse mandatum, than that he desired,
Ad sfrisandum, dicam, that they hack
And hew, i' the customary phrase, his
wife,

Uxorem tantum, and no harm beside.
If his instructions then be misconceived,
Nay, disobeyed, impute you blame to
him?

30 Cite me no Panicollus to the point,
As adverse! Oh, I quite expect his case —
How certain noble youths of Sicily
Having good reason to mistrust their wives,
Killed them and were absolved in conse-
quence:

While others who had gone beyond the
need

By mutilation of each paramour —
As Galba in the Horatian satire¹ grieved
— These were condemned to the galleys,
cast for guilt

Exceeding simple murder of a wife.

20 But why? Because of ugliness, and not
Cruely, in the said revenge, I trow!
Ex causa abscissionis partium;
Qui nempe id facientes reputantur
Naturæ inimici, man revolts
Against them as the natural enemy.

Pray, grant to one who meant to slit the
nose

And slash the cheek and slur the mouth, at
most,

A somewhat more humane award than
these

Obtained, these natural enemies of man!

30 *Objectum funditus corrui*t, flat you fall,
My Fisc! I waste no kick on you, but
pass.

Third aggravation: that our act was
done —

Not in the public street, where safety lies,
Not in the byc-place, caution may avoid,
Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for
crime, —

But in the very house, home, nook and
nest,

O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-
place,

In domo ac habitatione propria,
Where all presumably is peace and joy.

40 The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a
pest

When, creeping from congenial cottage,
she

Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify
His household more, i' the palace of the
king.

All three were housed and safe and con-
fident.

Moreover, the permission that our wife
Should have at length *domum pro carcere*,
Her own abode in place of prison — why,
We ourselves granted, by our other self
And proxy Paolo did we make such grant,
Meaning a lure? — elude the vigilance
O' the jailor, lead her to commodious
death,

While we ostensibly relented?

Ay,
Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc!
Is vengeance lawful? We demand our
right,

But find it will be questioned or refused
By jailor, turnkey, hangdog, — what
know we?

Pray, how is it we should conduct our-
selves?

To gain our private right — break public
peace,

Do you bid us? — trouble order with our
broils?

Endanger . . . shall I shrink to own . . . 60
ourselves? —

Who want no broken head nor bloody
nose

(While busied slitting noses, breaking
heads)

From the first tipstaff that may interfere!
Nam quicquid sit, for howsoever it be,

An de consensu nostro, if with leave
Or not, *a monasterio*, from the nuns,

Educta esset, she had been led forth,
*Potui*mus *id dissimulare*, we

May well have granted leave in pure
pretence,

Ut aditum habere, that thereby

An entry we might compass, a free move
Potuissemus, to her easy death,

Ad eam occidendam. Privacy
O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home,

say you?
Shall we give man's abode more privilege
Than God's? — for in the churches where

He dwells,

In quibus assistit Regum Rex, by means
Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the same,

Et nihilominus, therein, *in eis*,
Ex justa via delinquens, whoso dares 80

To take a liberty on ground enough,
Is pardoned, *excusatur*: that's our case

Delinquent through befitting cause. You
hold,

To punish a false wife in her own house
Is graver than, what happens every day,

To hale a debtor from his hiding-place
In church protected by the Sacrament?

To this conclusion have I brought my
Fisc?

Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their
nests;

Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?
Shall false wife yet have where to lay her
head?

¹ The Horatian satire: *Sat. I. 2, 46.*

"*Contra Fiscum definitum est!*" He's done!

"*Surge et scribe.*" make a note of it!
— If I may dally with Aquinas' word.

Or in the death-throe does he mutter still,
Fourth aggravation, that we changed our garb,

And rusticised ourselves with uncouth hat,

Rough vest and goatskin wrappage; murdered thus

Mutatione vestium, in disguise,
Whereby mere murder got complexed with

o Turned *homicidium ex insidiis*? Fisc,
How often must I round thee in the ears —
All means are lawful to a lawful end?
Concede he had the right to kill his wife:
The Count indulged in a travesty; why?
De illa ut vindictam sumeret,
That on her he might lawful vengeance

take,
Commodius, with more ease, *et tutius*,
And safer: wants he warrant for the

o Read to thy profit how the Apostle once
For ease and safety, when Damascus

raged,
Was let down in a basket by the wall
To 'scape the malice of the governor
(Another sort of Governor boasts Rome!)
— Many are of opinion, — covered close,
Concealed with — what except that very

cloak
He left behind at Troas afterward?
I shall not add a syllable: Molinists may!
Well, have we more to manage? Ay,
indeed!

o Fifth aggravation, that our wife reposed
Sub potestate iudicis, beneath
Protection of the judge, — her house was

styled
A prison, and his power became its guard
In lieu of wall and gate and bolt and bar.
This is a tough point, shrewd, redoubt-

able:
Because we have to supplicate that judge
Shall overlook wrong done the judgment-

seat.
Now, I might suffer my own nose be

pulled,
As man: but then as father . . . if the

Fisc
Touched one hair of my boy who held my

o In confidence he could not come to harm
Crossing the Corso, at my own desire,
Going to see those bodies in the church —
What would you say to that, Don Hyacinth?

This is the sole and single knotty point:
For, bid Tommati blink his interest,
You laud his magnanimity the while

But baulk Tommati's office, — he talks big!

"My predecessors in the place, — those sons

"O' the prophets that may hope succeed me here, —

"Shall I diminish their prerogative? 5a

"Count Guido Franceschini's honour! — well,

"Has the Governor of Rome none?"

You perceive,
The cards are all against us. Make a push,
Kick over table, as shrewd gamesters do!
We, do you say, encroach upon the rights,
Deny the omnipotence o' the Judge for-

sooth?
We, who have only been from first to last
Intending that his purpose should prevail,
Nay more, at times, anticipating it
At risk of his rebuke? 6a

But wait awhile!
Cannot we lump this with the sixth and last

Of the aggravations — that the Majesty
O' the Sovereign here received a wound?
to-wit,

Læsa Majestas, since our violence
Was out of envy to the course of law,
In odium litis? We cut short thereby
Three pending suits, promoted by our-

selves
I' the main, — which worsens crime,
accedit ad

Exasperationem criminis!

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full 7a
effect!

How, did not indignation chain my tongue,
Could I repel this last, worst charge of all!
(There is a porcupine to barbecue;
Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,
With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips; but,
good Lord,

Suppose the devil instigate the wench
To stew, not roast him? Stew my por-

cupine?
If she does, I know where his quills shall

stick!
Come, I must go myself and see to things:
I cannot stay much longer stewing here.) 8a
Our stomach . . . I mean, our soul is

stirred within,
And we want words. We wounded Maj-

esty?
Fall under such a censure, we? — who

yearned
So much that Majesty dispel the cloud
And shine on us with healing on her wings,
That we prayed Pope *Majestas*' very self
To anticipate a little the tardy pack,
Bell us forth deep the authoritative bay
Should start the beagles into sudden yelp

- Unisonous, — and, Gospel leading Law,
Grant there assemble in our own behoof
A Congregation, a particular Court,
A few picked friends of quality and place,
To hear the several matters in dispute, —
Causes big, little and indifferent,
Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-
growth, —
All at once (can one brush off such too
soon?)
And so with laudable dispatch decide
10 Whether we, in the main (to sink detail)
Were one the Pope should hold fast or let
go.
“What, take the credit from the Law?”
you ask?
Indeed, we did! Law ducks to Gospel
here:
Why should Law gain the glory and pro-
nounce
A judgment shall immortalise the Pope?
Yes: our self-abnegating policy
Was Joab’s — we would rouse our David’s
sloth,
Bid him encamp against a city, sack
A place whereto ourselves had long laid
siege,
35 Lest, taking it at last, it take our name
Nor be styled *Innocentinopolis*.
But no! The modesty was in alarm,
The temperance refused to interfere,
Returned us our petition with the word
“*Ad iudices suos*,” “Leave him to his
Judge!”
As who should say “Why trouble my
repose?
“Why consult Peter in a simple case,
“Peter’s wife’s sister in her fever-fit
“Might solve as readily as the Apostle’s
self?
30 “Are my Tribunals posed by aught so
plain?
“Hath not my Court a conscience? It is
of age,
“Ask it!”
We do ask, — but, inspire reply
To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I have
asked —
Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend
To even the few, the ineffectual words
Which rise from this our low and mundane
sphere
Up to thy region out of smoke and noise,
Seeking corroboration from thy nod
Who art all justice — which means mercy
too,
40 In a low noisy smoky world like ours
Where Adam’s sin made peccable his seed!
We venerate the father of the flock,
Whose last faint sands of life, the frittered
gold,
Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o’ the cone
And tapering heap of those collected years:
Never have these been hurried in their
flow,
Though justice fain would jog reluctant
arm,
In eagerness to take the forfeiture
Of guilty life: much less shall mercy sue
In vain that thou let innocence survive, 50
Precipitate no minim of the mass
O’ the all-so precious moments of thy life,
By pushing Guido into death and doom!
(Our Cardinal engages to go read
The Pope my speech, and point its beauties
out.
They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in
twelve,
Of something like a moderate return
Of the intellectuals, — never much to lose!
If I adroitly plant this passage there,
The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I 60
think,
Though he stand, beat till the old ear-
drum break!
— Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,
Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the
pains
Of poor papa, become proficient too
I’ the how and why and when, the time to
laugh,
The time to weep, the time, again, to pray,
And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ?
Well, well, we fathers can but care, but
cast
Our bread upon the waters!)
- In a word,
These secondary charges go to ground, 70
Since secondary, and superfluous, — notes
Quite from the main point: we did all
and some,
Little and much, adjunct and principal,
Causa honoris. Is there such a cause
As the sake of honour? By that sole test
try
Our action, nor demand if more or less,
Because of the action’s mode, we merit
blame
Or may-be deserve praise! The Court
decides.
Is the end lawful? It allows the means:
What we may do, we may with safety do, 80
And what means “safety” we ourselves
must judge.
Put case a person wrongs me past dispute:
If my legitimate vengeance be a blow,
Mistrusting my bare arm can deal that
blow,
I claim co-operation of a stick;
Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave a
sword;
Diffident of ability in fence,
I fee a friend, a swordsman to assist:
Take one — he may be coward, fool or
knave:
Why not take fifty? — and if these exceed 90

I' the due degree of drubbing, whom accuse
 But the first author of the aforesaid wrong
 Who put poor me to such a world of pains?
 Surgery would have just excised a wart;
 The patient made such pother, struggled so
 That the sharp instrument sliced nose and
 all.
 Taunt us not that our friends performed
 for pay!
 Ourselves had toiled for simple honour's
 sake:
 But country clowns want dirt they com-
 prehend,
 The piece of gold! Our reasons, which
 suffice
 Ourselves, be ours alone; our piece of
 gold
 Be, to the rustic, reason he approves!
 We must translate our motives like our
 speech,
 into the lower phrase that suits the sense
 O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let
 Each level have its language! Heaven
 speaks first
 To the angel, then the angel tames the
 word
 Down to the ear of Tobit: he, in turn,
 Diminishes the message to his dog,
 And finally that dog finds how the flea
 (Which else, importunate, might check
 his speed)
 Shall learn its hunger must have holiday.
 By application of his tongue or paw:
 So many varied sorts of language here,
 Each following each with pace to match
 the step,
Haud passibus æquis!
 Talking of which flea,
 Reminds me I must put in special word
 For the poor humble following, — the four
 friends,
Sicarii, our assassins caught and caged.
 Ourselves are safe in your approval now:
 Yet must we care for our companions,
 plead
 The cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-
 world faith)
 Who lie in tribulation for our sake.
Pauperum Procurator is my style:
 I stand forth as the poor man's advocate:
 And when we treat of what concerns the
 poor,
Et cum agatur de pauperibus,
 In bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,
In eorum causis, natural piety,
 40 *Pietas*, ever ought to win the day,
Triumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt,
 Because those very paupers constitute,
Thesaurus Christi, all the wealth of Christ.
 Nevertheless I shall not hold you long
 With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn
 Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear.

There beams a case refulgent from our
 books —
Castrensis, *Butringarius*,¹ everywhere
 I find it burn to dissipate the dark.
 'Tis this: a husband had a friend, which 54
 friend
 Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife
 In thought and purpose, — I pretend no
 more.
 To justify suspicion or dispel,
 He bids his wife make show of giving heed,
 Semblance of sympathy — propose, in
 fine,
 A secret meeting in a private place.
 The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambus-
 cade,
 To-wit, the husband posted with a pack
 Of other friends, who fall upon the first
 And beat his love and life out both at 60
 once.
 These friends were brought to question for
 their help;
 Law ruled "The husband being in the
 right,
 "Who helped him in the right can scarce
 be wrong" —
Opinio, an opinion every way,
Mulum tenenda cordi, heart should hold!
 When the inferiors follow as behis
 The lead o' the principal, they change
 their name,
 And, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called
 His mandatories, *mandatorii*,
 But helpmates, *sed auxiliatores*; since 70
 To that degree does honour's sake lend aid,
Ad eo honoris causa est efficax,
 That not alone, *non solum*, does it pour
 Itself out, *se diffundit*, on mere friends
 We bring to do our bidding of this sort,
In mandatorios simplices, but sucks
 Along with it in wide and generous whirl,
Sed etiam assassinii qualitate
Qualificatos, people qualified
 By the quality of assassination's self, 80
 Dare I make use of such neologism,
Ut ular verbo.

Haste we to conclude.
 Of the other points that favour, leave some
 few
 For Spreti; such as the delinquents' youth.
 One of them falls short, by some months,
 of age
 Fit to be managed by the gallows; two
 May plead exemption from our law's award,
 Being foreigners, subjects of the Gran-
 duke —
 I spare that bone to Spreti, and reserve
 Myself the juicier breast of argument — 90
 Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the
 Fise,

¹ *Castrensis*, *Butringarius*: Paulus de Castro
 and Jacobus Butringarius (as the name should
 be spelt), jurists of the sixteenth century.

Who furnished me the tid-bit: he must needs

Play off his privilege and rack the clowns, —
And they, at instance of the rack, confess
All four unanimously made resolve, —
The night o' the murder, in brief minute
snatched

Behind the back of Guido as he fled, —
That, since he had not kept his promise,
paid

The money for the murder on the spot,
So, reaching home again, might please ignore

10 The pact or pay them in improper coin, —
They one and all resolved, these hopeful
friends,

'Twere best inaugurate the morrow's light,
Nature recruited with her due repose,
By killing Guido as he lay asleep
Pillowed on wallet which contained their
fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this fact:
What fact could hope to make more manifest

Their rectitude, Guido's integrity?

For who fails recognise the touching truth

30 That these poor rustics bore no envy, hate,
Malice nor yet uncharitableness

Against the people they had put to death?

In them, did such an act reward itself?

All done was to deserve the simple pay,

Obtain the bread clowns earn by sweat of
brow,

And missing which, they missed of every-
thing —

Hence claimed pay, even at expense of life
To their own lord, so little warped (ad-
mire!)

By prepossession, such the absolute

30 Instinct of equity in rustic souls!

Whereas our Count, the cultivated mind,

He, wholly rapt in his serene regard

Of honour, he contemplating the sun

Who hardly marks if taper blink below, —

He, dreaming of no argument for death

Except a vengeance worthy noble hearts, —

Dared not so desecrate the deed, for sooth,

Vulgarise vengeance, as defray its cost

By money dug from out the dirty earth,

40 Irritant mere, in Ovid's phrase, to ill.

What though he lured base hinds by lucre's

hope, —

The only motive they could masticate,

Milk for babes, not strong meat which men
require?

The deed done, those coarse hands were
soiled enough,

He spared them the pollution of the pay.

So much for the allegement, thine, my Fisc,

Quo nil absurdius, 'han which nought more

mad,

Excogitari potest, may be squeezed

From out the cogitative brain of thee!

And now, thou excellent the Governor! 54

(Push to the peroration) *catcrum*

Enixe supplico, I strive in prayer,
Ut dominis meis, that unto the Court,
Benigna fronte, with a gracious brow,
Et oculis serenis, and mild eyes,
Perpendere placcat, it may please them
weigh,

Quod dominus Guido, that our noble Count

Occidit, did the killing in dispute,

Ut ejus honor tumulatus, that

The honour of him buried fathom-deep 64

In infamy, *in infamia*, might arise,

Resurgeret, as ghost breaks sepulchre!

Occidit, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife,

Quia illi fuit, since she was to him,

Obprobrio, a disgrace and nothing more!

Et genitores, killed her parents too,

Qui, who, *postposita verecundia*,

Having thrown off all sort of decency,

Filiam repudiarunt, had renounced

Their daughter, *atque declarare non* 70

Erubuerunt, nor felt blush tinge cheek,

Declaring, *meretricis genitam*

Esse, she was the offspring of a drab,

Ut ipse dehonestaretur, just

That so himself might lose his social rank!

Cujus mentem, and which daughter's heart

and soul,

They, *perverterunt*, turned from the right

course,

Et ad illicitos amores non

Dumtaxat pellexerunt, and to love

Not simply did alluringly incite, 80

Sed vi obedientiae, but by force

O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,

Coegerunt, forced and drove her to the

deed:

Occidit, I repeat he killed the clan,

Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore,

Lest peradventure longer life might trail,

Viveret, link by link his turpitude,

Invisus consanguineis, hateful so

To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*

Notatus, shunned by men of quality, 90

Relictus ab amicis, left i' the lurch

By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned

A common hack-block to try edge of jokes.

Occidit, and he killed them here in Rome,

In Urbe, the Eternal City, Sirs,

Nempe quæ alias spectata est,

The appropriate theatre which witnessed

once,

Matronam nobilem, Lucretia's self,

Abluere pudicitiae maculas,

Wash off the spots of her pudicity, 100

Sanguine proprio, with her own pure blood;

Quæ vidit and which city also saw,

Patrem, Virginus, *undequaque*, quite,

Impunem, with no sort of punishment,

Nor, *et non illaudatum*, lacking praise,

Sed pollutentem patricidio,

Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filiae*,

Of chaste Virginia, to avoid a rape,
Ne raperetur ad supra; so to heart,
Tanti illi cordi fuit, did he take,
Suspicio, the mere fancy men might have,
Honoris amittendi, of fame's loss,
Ut potius voluerit filia
Orbari, he preferred to lose his child,
Quam illa incederet, rather than she walk
The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,
Licet non sponte, though against her will.
Occidit — killed them, I reiterate —
In propria domo, in their own abode,
Ut adultera et parentes, that each wretch,
Conscii agnoscerent, might both see and say,
Nullum locum, there's no place, *nullumque*
esse

Asylum, nor yet refuge of escape,
Impenetrabilem, shall serve as bar,
Honori laeso, to the wounded one
In honour; *neve ibi opprobria*
Continuarentur, killed them on the spot,
Moreover, dreading lest within those walls
The opprobrium peradventure be pro-
longed.

Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium,
And that the domicile which witnessed
crime,
Esset et pænæ, might watch punishment:
Occidit, killed, I round you in the ears,
Quia alio modo, since by other mode,
Non poterat ejus existimatio,
There was no possibility his fame,
Laesa, gashed grossly, *iam enormiter*,
Ducere cicatrices, might be healed:
Occidit ut exemplum præberet
Uxoribus, killed her, so to lesson wives
Jura conjugii, that the marriage-oath,
Esse servanda, must be kept henceforth:
Occidit denique, killed her, in a word,
Ut pro posse honestus viveret,
That he, please God, might creditably live,
Sin minus, but if fate willed otherwise,
Proprii honoris, of his outraged fame,
Offensi, by Mannaia, if you please,
Commiscranda victima caderet,
The pitiable victim he should fall!

Done! I' the rough, i' the rough! But
done! And, lo,
Landed and stranded lies my very speech,
My miracle, my monster of defence —
Leviathan into the nose whereof
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with
thorn,
And given him to my maidens for a play!
I' the rough: to-morrow I review my piece,
Tame here and there undue floridity.
It's hard: you have to plead before these
priests
And poke at them with Scripture, or you
pass
For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant
O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes
By way of illustration of the law.

To-morrow stick in this, and throw out
that,
And, having first ecclesiasticised,
Regularise the whole, next emphasise,
Then latinise, and lastly Cicero-ise, 60
Giving my Fisc his finish. There's my
speech!

And where's my fry, and family and friends?
Where's that huge Hyacinth I mean to hug
Till he cries out "*Jam satis!* Lct me
breathe!"

Now, what an evening have I earned to-
day!

Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are false!
Oh the old mother, oh the fattish wife!
Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,
And wrap himself around with mamma's
veil

Done up to imitate papa's black robe, 70
(I'm in the secret of the comedy, —

Part of the program leaked out long ago!)
And call himself the Advocate o' the Poor,
Mimic Don father that defends the Count:
And for reward shall have a snail full glass
Of manly red resolio to himself,

— Always provided that he conjugate
Bibo, I drink, correctly — nor be found
Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!
How the ambitious to do so harden heart 80

As lightly hold by these home-sanctitudes,
To me is matter of bewilderment —
Bewilderment! Because ambition's range
Is nowise tethered by domestic tie.

Am I refused an outlet from my home
To the world's stage? — whereon a man
should play

The man in public, vigilant for law,
Zealous for truth, a credit to his kind,
Nay, — since, employing talent so, I yield
The Lord His own again with usury, — 90
A satisfaction, yea, to God Himself!
Well, I have modelled me by Agur's wish,
"Remove far from me vanity and lies,
"Feed me with food convenient for me!"

What

I' the world should a wise man require
beyond?

Can I but coax the good fat little wife
To tell her fool of a father the mad prank
His scapegrace nephew played this time
last year

At Carnival! He could not choose, I
think,

But modify that inconsiderate gift 100
O' the cup and cover (somewhere in the
will

Under the pillow, someone seems to guess)
— Correct that clause in favour of a boy

The trifle ought to grace, with name en-
graved,

Would look so well, produced in future
years

To pledge a memory, when poor papa
Latin and law are long since laid at rest —

Hyacintho dono dedit avus! Why,
The wife should get a necklace for her
pains,
The very pearls that made Violante proud,
And Pietro pawned for half their value
once, —

Redeemable by somebody, *ne sit*
Marita quæ rotundioribus
Onusta mammis . . . baccis ambulet:
Her bosom shall display the big round balls,
No braver proudly borne by wedded wife!
10 With which Horatian promise¹ I conclude.

Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my speech!
Off and away, first work then play, play,
play!
Botfini, burn thy books, thou blazing ass!
Sing "Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we must
live!"

IX. — JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES- BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

HAD I God's leave, how I would alter
things!
If I might read instead of print my
speech, —
Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower
Refuses obstinate to blow in print,
As wildings planted in a prim parterre, —
20 This scurvy room were turned an immense
hall;
Opposite, fifty judges in a row;
This side and that of me, for audience —
Rome:
And, where yon window is, the Pope should
hide —
Watch, curtained, but peep visibly enough.
A buzz of expectation! Through the crowd,
Jingling his chain and stumping with his
staff,
Up comes an usher, louts him low, "The
Court
"Requires the allocution of the Fisc!"
I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause
30 O'er the hushed multitude: I count —
One, two —

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of
law, —
When it may hap some painter, much in
vogue
Throughout our city nutritive of arts,
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,
To manufacture, as he knows and can,
A work may decorate a palace-wall,
Afford my lords their Holy Family, —
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court
40 How such a painter sets himself to paint?

¹ *Horatian promise:* Horace, *Epodes*, 8, 13.

Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe
A-journeying to Egypt, prove the piece:
Why, first he sedulously practiseth,
This painter, — girding loin and lighting
lamp, —

On what may nourish eye, make facile
hand;

Getteth him studies (styled by draughts-
men so)

From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk
Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves, —
This Luca or this Carlo or the like.

To him the bones their inmost secret yield,
Each notch and nodule signify their use: 54
On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,
And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man
"Familiarise thee with our play that lifts
"Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm
and foot!"

— Ensuring due correctness in the nude.
Which done, is all done? Not a whit, ye
know!

He, — to art's surface rising from her
depth, —

If some flax-poll'd soft-bearded sire be
found,

May simulate a Joseph, (happy chance!) —
Linneth exact each wrinkle of the brow, 60

Loseth no involution, check or chap,
Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives!

Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse
That poseth? (be the phrase accorded me!)

Each feminine delight of florid lip,
Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed down

with love,

Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous, —
Glad on the paper in a trice they go

To help his notion of the Mother-maid:
Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped! 70

Yea and her babe — that flexure of soft
limbs,

That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,
Contribute each an excellence to Christ.

Nay, since he humbly lent companionship,
Even the poor ass, unpanniered and elate

Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too;
While clouded shoon, staff, scrip and water-

gourd, —

Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste, —
No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn

Ministers to perfection of the piece: 80
Till now, such piece before him, part by
part, —

Such prelude ended, — pause our painter
may,

Submit his fifty studies one by one,
And in some sort boast "I have served my

lords."

But what? And hath he painted once this
while?

Or when ye cry "Produce the thing re-
quired,

"Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,

"Thy Journey through the Desert done
in oils!" —
What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his
sheets,
Fumbling for first this, then the other fact
Consigned to paper, — "studies," bear
the term! —
And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,
And fasten here a head and there a tail,
(The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-
tail
Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out —
By bits of reproduction of the life —
The picture, the expected Family?
I trow not! do I miss with my conceit
The mark, my lords? — not so my lords
were served!
Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,
And preferably buries him and broods
(Quite away from aught vulgar and extern)
On the inner spectrum, filtered through the
eye,
His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop,
E pluribus unum:¹ and the wiser he!
For in that brain, — their fancy sees at
work,
Could my lords peep indulged, — results
alone,
Not processes which nourish such results,
Would they discover and appreciate, — life
Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,
No gobbets but smooth comfortable
chyme²
Secreted from each snapped-up crudity, —
Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole
Truer to the subject, — the main central
truth
And soul o' the picture, would my Judges
spy, —
Not those mere fragmentary studied facts
Which answer to the outward frame and
flesh —
Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact
Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's
clout,
But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,
Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact
and false.
The studies — for his pupils and himself!
The picture be for our eximious Rome
And — who knows? — satisfy its Gov-
ernor,
Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought
(God give him joy of it) by Capena, soon
('Tis bruited) shall be glowing with the
brush
Of who hath long surpassed the Floren-
tine,³

The Urbinate⁴ and . . . what if I dared
add,

Even his master, yea the Cortonense,⁵ —
I mean the accomplished Ciro Ferri,⁶ Sirs!
(— Did not he die? I'll see before I print.)

End we exordium, Phœbus plucks my ear!
Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise,
Have I, — engaged as I were Ciro's self,
To paint a parallel, a Family,
The patriarch Pietro with his wise old wife 50
To boot (as if one introduced Saint Anne
By bold conjecture to complete the group)
And juvenile Pompilia with her babe,
Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,
Were all surprised by Herod, while out-
stretched

In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,
And killed — the very circumstance I paint,
Moving the pity and terror of my lords —
Exactly so have I, a month at least,
Your Fiscal, made me cognisant of facts, 60
Searched out, pried into, pressed the mean-
ing forth

Of every piece of evidence in point,
How bloody Herod slew these innocents, —
Until the glad result is gained, the group
Demonstrably presented in detail,
Their slumber and his onslaught, — like
as life.

Yea and, availing me of help allowed
By law, discreet provision lest my lords
Be too much troubled by effrontery, —
Therack, law plics suspected crime withal — 70
(Law that hath listened while the lyrist
sang

"*Lene tormentum ingenio admoveo,*"
Gently thou joggest by a twinge the wit,
"*Plerumque duro,*" else were slow to blab!)
Through this concession my full cup runs
o'er:

The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.
Therefore by part and part I clutch my
case

Which, in entirety now, — momentous
task, —

My lords demand, so render them I must,
Since, one poor pleading more and I have 80
done.

But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,
Parade my studies, fifty in a row,
As though the Court were yet in pupilage,
Claimed not the artist's ultimate appeal?
Much rather let me soar the height pre-
scribed

And, bowing low, proffer my picture's self!
No more of proof, disproof, — such virtue
was,

¹ *E pluribus unum*: "one made out of many"
(Virgil, *Mœneum*, 103).

² *Chyme*: the matter into which food is re-
duced by the juices of the stomach.

³ *The Florentine*: Michel Angelo.

⁴ *The Urbinate*: Rafael.

⁵ *The Cortonense*: Pietro da Cortona.

⁶ *Ciro Ferri*: a painter, who lived 1634-1689,
a pupil of Pietro da Cortona. He had now
been dead some nine years.

Such vice was never in Pompilia, now!
Far better say "Behold Pompilia!" — (for
I leave the family as unmanageable,
And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)
Hath calumny imputed to the fair
A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,
Much more, blind hidden horrors best un-
named?

Shall I descend to prove you, point by
point,

Never was knock-knee known nor splay-
foot found

- 10 In Phryne? (I must let the portrait go,
Content me with the model, I believe) —
— I prove this? An indignant sweep of
hand,

Dash at and doing away with drapery,
And, — use your eyes, Athenians, smooth
she smiles!¹

Or, — since my client can no longer smile,
And more appropriate instances abound, —
What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave
Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine?
Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes vir-
ginal,

- 20 Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia!

Thus at least

I, by the guidance of antiquity,
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,
Sure that the innocence thus shown is safe;
Sure, too, that, while I plead, the echoes
cry

(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous
Fame!)

"Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall
mar,

"Lucretia's soul comport with Tarquin's
lie,

"When thistles grow on vines or thorns
yield figs,

"Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-
seat!"

- 30 A great theme: may my strength be ade-
quate!

For — paint Pompilia, dares my feeble-
ness?

How did I unaware engage so much
— Find myself undertaking to produce
A faultless nature in a flawless form?

What's here? Oh, turn aside nor dare
the blaze

Of such a crown, such constellation, say,
As jewels here thy front, Humanity!

First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl;
Then childhood — stone which, dew-drop

at the first,

- 40 (An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,
Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so:
Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last and
best,

¹ Alluding to the defence of the courtesan
Phryné by Hyperides, who secured a verdict
by displaying her unveiled beauty to the court.

Womanliness and wifehood opaline,
Its milk-white pallor, — chastity, — suf-
fused

With here and there a tint and hint of
flame, —

Desire, — the lapidary loves to find.
Such jewels bind conspicuously thy brow,

Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife —
Crown the ideal in our earth at last!

What should a faculty like mine do here? 50
Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry hand!

Which is to say, — lose no time but begin!
Sermocinando ne declinem, Sirs,

Ultra clepsydram, as our preachers smile,
Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Whereupon,

As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic
plunge —

Begin at once with marriage, up till when
Little or nothing would arrest your love,

In the easeful life o' the lady; lamb and
lamb,

How do they differ? Know one, you know 60
all

Manners of maidenhood: mere maiden
she.

And since all lambs are like in more than
fleece,

Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too
frisks —

O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker
sex!

To whom, the Teian² teaches us, for gift,
Not strength, — man's dower, — but

beauty, nature gave,
"Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of

shields!"

And what is beauty's sure concomitant,
Nay, intimate essential character,

But melting wiles, deliciouslest deceits, 70
The whole redoubted armoury of love?

Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevellings
O' the hair of youth that dances April in,

And easily-imagined Hebe-slips
O'er sward which May makes over-smooth

for foot —
These shall we pry into? — or wiselier

wink,
Though numerous and dear they may have
been?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his pomp!
Discedunt nunc amores, loves, farewell!

Maneat amor, let love, the sole, remain! 80
Farewell to dewiness and prime of life!

Remains the rough determined day: dance
done,

To work, with plough and harrow! What
comes next?

'Tis Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's
step,

Cries "No more friskings o'er the foodful
glebe,"

² *The Teian*: Anacreon.

"Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordingly, —
first crack
O' the thong, — we hear that his young
wife was barred,
Cohibita fuit, from the old free life,
Vitam liberioiorem ducere.
Demur we? Nowise: heifer brave the
hind?

We seek not there should lapse the natural
law,

The proper piety to lord and king
And husband: let the heifer bear the yoke!
Only, I crave he cast not patience off,
10 This hind; for deem you she endures the
whip,

Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive, kicks?
What if the adversary's charge be just,
And all untowardly she pursue her way
With groan and grunt, though hind strike
ne'er so hard?

If petulant remonstrance made appeal,
Unseasonable, o'erprotracted, — if
Importunate challenge taxed the public
ear

When silence more decorously had served
For protestation, — if Pompilian plaint
20 Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire, —
Why, such mishaps, ungainly though they
be,

Ever companion change, are incident
To altered modes and novelty of life:
The philosophic mind expects no less,
Smilingly knows and names the crisis, sits
Waiting till old things go and new arrive.
Therefore, I hold a husband but inept
Who turns impatient at such transit-time,
As if this running from the rod would last!

30 Since, even while I speak, the end is
reached:

Success awaits the soon-disheartened man.
The parents turn their backs and leave the
house,

The wife may wail but none shall intervene:
He hath attained his object, groom and
bride

Partake the nuptial bower no soul can see,
Old things are passed and all again is new,
Over and gone the obstacles to peace,
Novorum — tenderly the Mantuan¹ turns
The expression, some such purpose in his
eye

10 *Nascitur ordo!* Every storm is laid,
And forth from plain each pleasant herb
may peep,
Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late:
(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 'tis wont with plant and
wife,
Flowers, — after a suppression to good end,

¹ *The Mantuan*: Virgil, *Ecl.* 4, 5 — *Magnus
ex integro saculorum nascitur ordo.*

Still, when they do spring forth, — sprout
here, spread there,

Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the
ground?

He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered, —
still

'Tis a chance wayfarer shall pluck the 50
increase.

Just so, respecting persons not too much,
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of femininity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck: what if the charge be
true?

The fault were graver had she looked with
choice,

Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,
Who, in the whole town, go without the
prize!

To nobody she destined donative,
But, first come was first served, the accuser 60
saith.

Put case her sort of . . . in this kind . . .
escapes

Were many and oft and indiscriminate —
Impute ye as the action were prepenae,
The gift particular, arguing malice so?
Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag
"I was preferred to Guido" — when 'tis
clear

The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent²
breast

Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as
well?

One chalice entertained the company;
And if its peevish lord object the more, 70
Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,
Haste we to advertise him — charm of
cheek,

Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,
All womanly components in a spouse,
These are no household-bread each stran-
ger's bite

Leaves by so much diminished for the
mouth

O' the master of the house at supper-time:
But rather like a lump of spice they lie,
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neigh-
bourhood

Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain. 80

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied!
Concede we there was reason in his wrong,
Grant we his grievance and content the
man!

For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself;
Ere three revolving years have crowned
their course,

Off and away she puts this same reproach
Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift
O' the sweets of wifehood stored to other
ends:

² *Olent*: odorous.

No longer shall he blame "She none ex-
cludes,"
But substitute "She laudably sees all,
"Searches the best out and selects the
same."
For who is here, long sought and latest
found,
Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,
"*Constans in levitate*," — Ha, my lords?
Calm in his levity, — indulge the quip! —
Since 'tis a levite bears the bell away,
Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's
choice.

10 'Tis no ignoble object, husband!
Doubt'st?
When here comes tripping Flaccus¹ with
his phrase
"Trust me, no miscreant singled from the
mob,
"*Crede non illum tibi de scelestis*
"*Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,
A priest, dost hear? Why then, submit
thyself!
Priest, ay and very phoenix of such fowl,
Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,
Comely too, since precise the precept
points —
On the selected levite be there found

20 Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the
mind
Come all uncandid through the thwarting
flesh!
Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,
Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way?
Since well he smote the harp and sweetly
sang,
And danced till Abigail came out to see,
And sewing smiled and smiling ministered
The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,
With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,
Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,

30 Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly
done —
They might have been beforehand with
him else)
And died — would Guido have behaved
as well!
But ah, the faith of early days is gone,
Heu prisca fides! Nothing died in him
Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,
Which, when they ebb from souls they
should o'erflow,
Discover stub, mced, sludge and ugliness.
(The Pope, we know, is Neapolitan
And relishes a sea-side simile.)

40 Deserted by each charitable way,
Guido, left high and dry, shows jealous
now!
Jealous avouched, paraded: tax the fool
With any peccadillo, he responds
"Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,
"Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,

"Being jealous: now would threaten,
sword in hand,
"Now manage to mix poison in her sight,
"And so forth: jealously I dealt, in fine."
Concede thus much, and what remains to
prove?
Have I to teach my masters what effect 50
Hath jealousy, and how, befooling men,
It makes false true, abuses eye and ear,
Turns mere mist adamant, loads with
sound
Silence, and into void and vacancy
Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring
foes?
Therefore who owns "I watched with
jealousy
"My wife," adds "for no reason in the
world!"
What need that, thus proved madman, he
remark
"The thing I thought a serpent proved an
eel"? —
Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot 60
length,
And not an inch too long for that rare pie
(Master Arcangeli has heard of such)
Whose succulence makes fasting bearable;
Meant to regale some moody splenetic
Who, pleasing to mistake the donor's gift,
Spying I know not what Lernaean snake*
I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps
forsooth
The dainty in the dust.

Enough! Prepare,
Such luns announced, for downright
lunacy!
Insaniti homo, threat succeeds to threat, 70
And blow redoubles blow, — his wife, the
block.
But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand
That buffets her? The injurious idle
stone
Rebounds and hits the head of him who
flung.
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now,
rageful cause,
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.
Rebellion, say I? — rather, self-defence,
Laudable wish to live and see good days,
Pricks our Pompilia now to fly the fool
By any means, at any price, — nay, more, 80
Nay, most of all, i' the very interest
O' the fool that, baffled of his blind desire
At any price, were truest victor so.
Shall he effect his crime and lose his
soul?
No, dictates duty to a loving wife!
Far better that the unconsummated blow,
Adroitly baulked by her, should back again,
Correctively admonish his own pate!

* *Lernaean snake*: a reference to the hydra of
Lerna, killed by Hercules.

¹ *Flaccus*: Horace, *Odes*, II. 4, 17.

Crime then, — the Court is with me? —
 she must crush:
 How crush it? By all efficacious means;
 And these, — why, what in woman should
 they be?
 "With horns the bull, with teeth the lion
 fights;
 "To woman," quoth the lyrist¹ quoted
 late,
 "Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty, Nature
 gave."
 Pretty i' the Pagan! Who dares blame
 the use
 Of armoury thus allowed for natural,
 Exclaim against a seeming-dubious play
 O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and
 shield
 Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance
 By poor Pompilia? Grant she somewhat
 plied
 Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,
 The witchery of gesture, spell of word,
 Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,
 Yea stranger, as a champion on her side?
 Such man, being but mere man, ('twas all
 she knew),
 Must be made sure by beauty's silken bond,
 The weakness that subdues the strong, and
 bows
 Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the tale
 O' the husband, which is false, were proved
 and true
 To the letter — or the letters, I should say,
 Abominations he professed to find
 And fix upon Pompilia and the priest, —
 Allow them hers — for though she could
 not write,
 In early days of Eve-like innocence
 That pluck no apple from the knowledge-
 tree,
 Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks and
 eats
 And knows — especially how to read and
 write:
 And so Pompilia, — as the move o' the
 maw,
 Quoth Persius,² makes a parrot bid "Good
 day!"
 A crow salute the concave, and a pie
 Endeavour at proficiency in speech, —
 So she, through hunger after fellowship,
 May well have learned, though late, to
 play the scribe:
 As indeed, there's one letter on the list
 Explicitly declares did happen here.
 "You thought my letters could be none
 of mine,"
 She tells her parents — "mine, who wanted
 skill;
 40 "But now I have the skill, and write, you
 see!"

She needed write love-letters, so she learned,
 "*Negatus artifex sequi voces*" — though
 'This letter nowise 'scapes the common lot,
 But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,
 Found by the husband's self who forged
 them all.
 Yet, for the sacredness of argument,
 For this once an exemption shall it plead —
 Anything, anything to let the wheels
 Of argument run glibly to their goal!
 Concede she wrote (which were prepos- 50
 terous)
 This and the other epistle, — what of it?
 Where does the figment touch her candid
 fame?
 Being in peril of her life — "my life,
 "Nct an hour's purchase," as the letter
 runs, —
 And having but one stay in this extreme,
 Out of the wide world but a single friend —
 What could she other than resort to him,
 And how with any hope resort but thus?
 Shall modesty dare bid a stranger brave
 Danger, disgrace, any death in her behalf — 60
 Think to entice the sternness of the steel
 Yet spare love's loadstone moving manly
 mind?
 — Most of all, when such mind is ham-
 pered so
 By growth of circumstance athwart the
 life
 O' the natural man, that decency forbids
 He stoop and take the common privilege,
 Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar do.
 A man is wedded to philosophy,
 Married to statesmanship; a man is old;
 A man is fettered by the foolishness 70
 He took for wisdom and talked ten years
 since;
 A man is, like our friend the Canon here,
 A priest, and wicked if he break his vow:
 Shall he dare love, who may be Pope one
 day?
 Despite the coil of such encumbrance here,
 Suppose this man could love, unhappily,
 And would love, dared he only let love
 show!
 In case the woman of his love speaks first,
 From what embarrassment she sets him
 free!
 "Tis I who break reserve, begin appeal, 80
 "Confess that, whether you love me or no,
 "I love you!" What an ease to dignity,
 What help of pride from the hard high-
 backed chair
 Down to the carpet where the kittens bask,
 All under the pretence of gratitude!
 From all which, I deduce — the lady here
 Was bound to proffer nothing short of love
 To the priest whose service was to save her.
 What?
 Shall she propose him lucre, dust o' the
 mine,

¹ The lyrist: Anacreon. See p. 824, l. 65.

² Persius: Prologue to *Satires*, 6-13.

Rubbish o' the rock, some diamond, muck-
worms prize,
Some pearl secreted by a sickly fish?
Scarcely! She caters for a generous taste.
'Tis love shall beckon, beauty bid to breast,
Till all the Samson sink into the snare!
Because, permit the end — permit there-
with
Means to the end!

How say you, good my lords?
I hope you heard my adversary ring
The changes on this precept: now, let me
10 Reverse the peal! *Quia dato licito fine,*
Ad illum assequendum ordinata
Non sunt damnanda media, — licit end
Enough was found in mere escape from

death,
To legalise our means illicit else
Of feigned love, false allurements, fancied
fact.

Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,
(See that *Idyllium Moschi*¹) seeking help,
In the anxiety of motherhood,
Allowably promised "Who shall bring re-
port

20 "Where he is wandered to, my winged
babe,

"I give him for reward a nectared kiss;
"But who brings safely back the truant's
self,

"His be a super-sweet makes kiss seem
cold!"

Are not these things writ for example-
sake?

To such permitted motive, then, refer
All those professions, else were hard ex-
plain,
Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest of
love!

He is Myrtilus, Amaryllis² she,
She burns, he freezes, — all a mere device

30 To catch and keep the man, may save her
life,

Whom otherwise nor catches she nor
keeps!

Worst, once, turns best now: in all faith,
she feigns:

Feigning, — the liker innocence to guilt,
The truer to the life in what she feigns!

How if Ulysses, — when, for public good
He sunk particular qualms and played the

spy,
Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's
garb —

How if he first had boggled at this clout,
Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish?
Grime is grace

40 To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.

Hence, beyond promises, we praise each
proof

¹ *Idyllium Moschi*: Moschus, *Idyll*, I. 4. 5.

² *Myrtilus*, *Amaryllis*: typical pastoral lovers.

That promise was not simply made to
break,

Mere moonshine-structure meant to fade
at dawn:

We praise, as consequent and requisite,
What, enemies allege, were more than
words,

Deeds — meetings at the window, twilight-
trysts,

Nocturnal entertainments in the dim
Old labyrinthine palace; lies, we know —
Inventions we, long since, turned inside
out.

Must such external semblance of intrigue 54
Demonstrate that intrigue there lurks
perdue?

Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut?
He were a Molinist who dared maintain
That midnight meetings in a screened
alcove

Must argue folly in a matron — since
So would he bring a slur on Judith's self,
Commended beyond women, that she
lured

The lustful to destruction through his lust.
Pompilia took not Judith's liberty,
No faulchion find you in her hand to smite, 60
No damsel to convey in dish the head
Of Holophernes, — style the Canon so —
Or is it the Count? If I entangle me
With my similitudes, — if wax wings melt,
And earthward down I drop, not mine the
fault:

Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,
Whereof the beamy smile affects my
flight!

What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive
I' the warmth that proves the bane of
Icarus?

Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary 70
Pompilia leave her husband, seek the
house

O' the parents: and because 'twixt home
and home

Lies a long road with many a danger rife,
Lions by the way and serpents in the path,
To rob and ravish, — much behoves she
keep

Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame
For her own sake much, but for his sake
more,

The ingrate husband's. Evidence shall
be,

Plain witness to the world how white she
walks

I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome 80
she reach.

And who so proper witness as a priest?
Gainsay ye? Let me hear who dares
gainsay!

I hope we still can punish heretics!
"Give me the man" I say with him of
Gath,

"That we may fight together!" None, I think:
The priest is granted me.

Then, if a priest,
One juvenile and potent: else, mayhap,
That dragon, our Saint George would slay,
slays him.
And should fair face accompany strong
hand,
The more complete equipment: nothing
mars
Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw
I' the worker: as 'tis said Saint Paul him-
self
Deplored the check o' the puny presence,
still

Cheating his fulmination of its flash,
Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.
Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she
takes, —
Both juvenile and potent, handsome
too, —
In all obedience: "good," you grant again.
Do you? I would you were the husband,
lords!

How prompt and facile might departure
be!

How boldly would Pompilia and the priest
March out of door, spread flag at beat of
drum,

But that inapprehensive Guido grants
Neither premiss nor yet conclusion here,
And, purblind, dreads a bear in every
bush!

For his own quietude and comfort, then,
Means must be found for flight in mas-
querade

At hour when all things sleep. — "Save
jealousy!"

Right, Judges! Therefore shall the lady's
wit

Supply the boon thwart nature baulks him
of,

And do him service with the potent drug
(Helen's nepenthe,¹ as my lords opine)
Which respites blessedly each fretted
nerve

O' the much-enduring man: accordingly,
There lies he, duly dosed and sound
asleep,

Relieved of woes or real or raved about.
While soft she leaves his side, he shall not
wake;

Nor stop who steals away to join her
friend,

Nor do him mischief should he catch that
friend

Intent on more than friendly office, —
nay,

¹ *Nepenthe*: a drug given to Helen by the
Egyptian Polydamna, producing forgetfulness of
pain (Homer, *Od.* IV. 220-230).

Nor get himself raw head and bones laid
bare
In payment of his apparition!

Thus
Would I defend the step, — were the thing
true
Which is a fable, — see my former ¹¹
speech, —
That Guido slept (who never slept a wink)
Through treachery, an opiate from his
wife,
Who not so much as knew what opiates
mean.

Now she may start: or hist, — a stoppage
still!

A journey is an enterprise of cost!
As in campaigns, we fight but others pay,
*Suis expensis, nemo militat.*²
'Tis Guido's self we guard from accident,
Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed
Nowise in misadventures by the way, ⁵⁰
Hard riding and rough quarters, the rude
fare,

The unready host. What magic mitigates
Each plague of travel to the unpractised
wife?

Money, sweet Sirs! And were the fiction
fact

She helped herself thereto with liberal hand
From out her husband's store, — what
fitter use

Was ever husband's money destined to?
With bag and baggage thus did Dido once
Decamp, — for more authority, a queen!

So is she fairly on her route at last, ⁶⁰
Prepared for either fortune: nay and if
The priest, now all a-glow with enterprise,
Cool somewhat presently when fades the
flush

O' the first adventure, clouded o'er belike
By doubts, misgivings how the day may
die,

Though born with such auroral brilliance,
— if

The brow seem over-pensive and the lip
'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsome
late, —

Vanquished by tedium of a prolonged
jaunt

In a close carriage o'er a jolting road, ⁷⁰
With only one young female substitute
For seventeen other Canons of ripe age
Were wont to keep him company in
church, —

Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate
The silent cloud that, gathering, bodes her
bale? —

Prop the irresoluteness may portend

² *Suis expensis, nemo militat*: "no one goeth
a warfare at his own cost."

- Suspension of the project, check the flight,
Bring ruin on them both? Use every
means,
Since means to the end are lawful! What
i' the way
Of wile should have allowance like a
kiss
Sagely and sisterly administered,
Sororia saltem oscula? We find
Such was the remedy her wit applied
To each incipient scruple of the priest,
If we believe, — as, while my wit is mine
10 I cannot, — what the driver testifies,
Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool
Of Guido and his friend the Governor, —
Avowal I proved wrung from out the
wretch,
After long rotting in imprisonment,
As price of liberty and favour: long
They tempted, he at last succumbed, and
lo
Counted them out full tale each kiss and
more,
"The journey being one long embrace,"
quothe he.
Still, though we should believe the driver's
lie,
20 Nor even admit as probable excuse,
Right reading of the riddle, — as I urged
In my first argument, with fruit perhaps —
That what the owl-like eyes (at back of
head!)
O' the driver, drowsed by driving night
and day,
Supposed a vulgar interchange of lips,
This was but innocent jog of head 'gainst
head,
Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch
pear
From branch and branch contiguous in the
wind,
When Autumn blusters and the orchard
rocks: —
30 That rapid run and the rough road were
cause
O' the casual ambiguity, no harm
I' the world to eyes awake and penetrative.
Say, — not to grasp a truth I can release
And safely fight without, yet conquer
still, —
Say, she kissed him, say, he kissed her
again!
Such osculation was a potent means,
A very efficacious help, no doubt:
Such with a third part of her nectar did
Venus imbue: why should Pompilia fling
40 The poet's declaration in his teeth? —
Pause to employ what — since it had
success,
And kept the priest her servant to the
end —
We must presume of energy enough,
No whit superfluous, so permissible?
- The goal is gained: day, night and yet a
day
Have run their round: a long and devious
road
Istraversed, — many manners, various men
Passed in review, what cities did they see,
What hamlets mark, what profitable food
For after-meditation cull and store! 50
Till Rome, that Rome whereof — this
voice
Would it might make our Molinists ob-
serve,
That she is built upon a rock nor shall
Their powers prevail against her! —
Rome, I say,
Is all but reached; one stage more and
they stop
Saved: pluck up heart, ye pair, and for-
ward, then!
- Ah, Nature — baffled she recurs, alas!
Nature imperiously exacts her due,
Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak:
Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon, 60
Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-
while.
The innocent sleep soundly: sound she
sleeps,
So let her slumber, then, unguarded save
By her own chastity, a triple mail,
And his good hand whose stalwart arms
have borne
The sweet and senseless burthen like a
babe
From coach to couch, — the serviceable
strength!
Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly
On the pale beauty prisoned in embrace,
Stooped over, stole a balmy breath per- 70
haps
For more assurance sleep was not de-
cease —
"Ut vidi," "how I saw!" succeeded by
"Ut perii," "how I sudden lost my
brains!"
— What harm ensued to her unconscious
quite?
For, curiosity — how natural!
Importunateness — what a privilege
In the ardent sex! And why curb ardour
here?
How can the priest but pity whom he
saved?
And pity is so near to love, and love
So neighbourly to all unreasonableness! 80
As to love's object, whether love were sage
Or foolish, could Pompilia know or care,
Being still sound asleep, as I premised?
Thus the philosopher absorbed by thought,
Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book
The while besiegers sacked his Syracuse,
Was ignorant of the imminence o' the
point

O' the sword till it surprised him: let it stab,
And never knew himself was dead at all.
So sleep thou on, secure whate'er betide!
For thou, too, hast thy problem hard to solve —
How so much beauty is compatible
With so much innocence!

Fit place, methinks,
While in this task she rosily is lost,
To treat of and repel objection here
Which, — frivolous, I grant, — my mind
misgives,
May somehow still have flitted, gadfly-
like,
And teased the Court at times — as if, all
said
And done, there seemed, the Court might
nearly say,
In a certain acceptance, somewhat more
Of what may pass for insincerity,
Falsehood, throughout the course Pom-
pilia took,
Than befits Christian. Pagans held, we
know,
Man always ought to aim at good and
truth,
Not always put one thing in the same
words:

*Non idem semper dicere sed spectare
Debemus.* But the Pagan yoke was light;
“Lie not at all,” the exacter precept bids:
Each least lie breaks the law, — is sin, we
hold.

I humble me, but venture to submit —
What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure:
And sin, which hinders sin of deeper dye,
Softens itself away by contrast so.
Conceive me! Little sin, by none at all,
Were properly condemned for great: but
great,

By greater, dwindles into small again.
Now, what is greatest sin of womanhood?
That which unwomans it, abolishes
The nature of the woman, — impudence.
Who contradicts me here? Concede me,
then,

Whatever friendly fault may interpose
To save the sex from self-abolishment
Is three-parts on the way to virtue's rank!
And, what is taxed here as duplicity,
Feint, wile and trick, — admitted for the
nonce, —

What worse do one and all than interpose,
Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,
Statuesquely, in the Mediccan mode,¹
Before shame which modesty would veil?
Who blames the gesture prettily perverse?
Thus, — lest ye miss a point illustra-
tive, —

¹ *In the Mediccan mode: i.e., like the statue known as the Venus de' Medici.*

Admit the husband's calumny — allow
That the wife, having penned the epistle
fraught
With horrors, charge on charge of crime
she heaped
O' the head of Pietro and Violante —
(still
Presumed her parents) — having dis-
patched the same
To their arch-enemy Paolo, through free
choice
And no sort of compulsion in the world —
Put case she next discards simplicity
For craft, denies the voluntary act,
Declares herself a passive instrument
I' the husband's hands; that, duped by
knavery,
She traced the characters she could not
write,
And took on trust the unread sense which,
read,
And recognised were to be spurned at once:
Allow this calumny, I reiterate!
Who is so dull as wonder at the pose 60
Of our Pompilia in the circumstance?
Who sees not that the too-ingenuous soul,
Repugnant even at a duty done
Which brought beneath too scrutinising
glare

The misdemeanours, — buried in the
dark, —
Of the authors of her being, as believed, —
Stung to the quick at her impulsive deed,
And willing to repair what harm it worked,
She — wise in this beyond what Nero
proved,
Who when folk urged the candid juvenile 70
To sign the warrant, doom the guilty dead,
“Would I had never learned to write,”
quoth he!
—Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried
“To read or write I never learned at all!”
O splendidly mendacious!

But time fleets:
Let us not linger: hurry to the end,
Since flight does end, and that disastrously.
Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess,
Disparage each expedient else to praise,
Call failure folly! Man's best effort fails. 80
After ten years' resistance Troy suc-
cumbed:
Could valour save a town, Troy still had
stood.
Pompilia came off halting in no point
Of courage, conduct, her long journey
through:
But nature sank exhausted at the close,
And as I said, she swooned and slept all
night.
Morn breaks and brings the husband: we
assist
At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds.

Ha, how is this? What moonstruck rage
is here?

Though we confess to partial frailty now,
To error in a woman and a wife,
Is't by the rough way she shall be re-
claimed?

Who bursts upon her chambered privacy?
What crowd profanes the chaste *cubi-
culum*?

What outcries and lewd laughter, scurril
gibe

And ribald jest to scare the ministrant
Good angels that commerce with souls in
sleep?

10 Why, had the worst crowned Guido to his
wish,

Confirmed his most irrational surmise,
Yet there be bounds to man's emotion,
checks

To an immoderate astonishment.
'Tis decent horror, regulated wrath,
Befit our dispensation: have we back
The old Pagan licence? Shall a Vulcan
clap

His net o' the sudden and expose the
pair

To the unquenchable universal mirth?
A feat, antiquity saw scandal in

20 So clearly, that the nauseous tale thereof —
Demodocus his nugatory song¹ —

Hath ever been concluded modern stuff
Impossible to the mouth of the grave Muse,
So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey
By some impertinent pickthank. O thou
fool,

Count Guido Franceschini, what didst
gain

By publishing thy secret to the world?
Were all the precepts of the wise a waste —
Bred in thee not one touch of reverence?

10 Admit thy wife — admonish we the fool, —
Were falseness' self, why chronicle thy
shame?

Much rather should thy teeth bite out thy
tongue,

Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,
Silence become historiographer,
And thou — thine own Cornelius Tacitus!
But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier,
lords!

— Still, moon-like, penetrates the en-
croaching mist

And bursts, all broad and bare, on night,
ye know!

Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, per-
haps,

10 Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,
Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-
pure,²

Confronts the foe, — nay, catches at his
sword

And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.
Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,
Crowned him, this time, the virtuous
woman's way,

With an exact obedience; he brought
sword,

She drew the same, since swords are meant
to draw.

Tell not me 'tis sharp play with tools on
edge!

It was the husband chose the weapon here.
Why did not he inaugurate the game 50

With some gentility of apophthegm
Still pregnant on the philosophic page,

Some captivating cadence still a-lisp
O' the poet's lyre? Such spells subdue
the surge,

Make tame the tempest, much more
mitigate

The passions of the mind, and probably
Had moved Pompilia to a smiling blush.

No, he must needs prefer the argument
O' the blow: and she obeyed, in duty
bound,

Returned him buffet ratiocinative — 60
Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,

For wife must follow whither husband
leads,

Vindicate honour as himself prescribes,
Save him the very way himself bids save!

No question but who jumps into a quag
Should stretch forth hand and pray us
"Pull me out

"By the hand!" such were the customary
cry:

But Guido pleased to bid "Leave hand
alone!

"Join both feet, rather, jump upon my
head:

"I extricate myself by the rebound!" 70
And dutifully as enjoined she jumped —

Drew his own sword and menaced his own
life,

Anything to content a wilful spouse.

And so he was contented — one must do
justice to the expedient which succeeds,
Strange as it seem: at flourish of the
blade,

The crowd drew back, stood breathless
and abashed,

Then murmured "This should be no
wanton wife,

"No conscience-stricken sinner, caught i'
the act,

"And patiently awaiting our first stone: 80
"But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered
thing,

"Has rushed so far, misguidedly per-
haps,

"Meaning no more harm than a fright
ened sheep.

¹ Demodocus his nugatory song: in Homer,
Od. VIII. 266-366.

² Thalassian-pure: pure as the sea; from
thalassa, the Greek word for sea.

'She sought for aid; and if she made mistake
'T' the man could aid most, why — so mortals do:
"Even the blessed Magdalen mistook
"Far less forgiveably: consult the place —
"Supposing him to be the gardener,
"Sir," said she, and so following." Why more words?
Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent:
What would the husband more than gain his cause,
And find that honour flash in the world's eye,
His apprehension was lest soil had smirched?

So, happily the adventure comes to close
Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge
Preposterous: at mid-day he groans "How dark!"
Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine!
Where is the ambiguity to blame,
The flaw to find in our Pompilia? Safe
She stands, see! Does thy comment follow quick
"Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed;
"But thither she picked way by devious path —
"Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all!
"I recognise success, yet, all the same,
"Importunately will suggestion prompt —
"Better Pompilia gained the right to boast
"No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,
"I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot!"
"Why, being in a peril, show mistrust
"Of the angels set to guard the innocent?
"Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help
"Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused
"Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,
"Since low with high, and good with bad is linked?
"Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.
"There stands Hesione¹ thrust out by Troy,
"Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,
"Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest,
"At a safe distance both distressful watch,
"While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.
"I lock that, white and perfect to the end,

¹ *Hesione*: daughter of Laomedon, king of Troy, exposed on a rock to avert a plague caused by her father's breach of faith, and saved by Hercules, son of Alcmena.

"She wait till Jove dispatch some demi-god;
"Not that, — impatient of celestial club 44
"Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast, —
"She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,
"And so elude the purblind monster! Ay,
"The trick succeeds, but 'tis an ugly trick,
"Where needs have been no trick!"

My answer? Faugh;
Nimis incongrue! Too absurdly put!
Scientiam ego teneo contrariam,
Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.
The heavens were bound with brass, —
Jove far at feast
(No feast like that thou didst not ask me 50 to,
Arcangeli, — I heard of thy regale!)
With the unblamed *Æthiop*,² — Hercules spun wool
I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked —
The brute came paddling all the faster.
You
O! Troy, who stood at distance, where's the aid
You offered in the extremity? Most and least,
Gentle and simple, here the Governor,
There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,
Shook heads and waited for a miracle,
Or went their way, left Virtue to her 60 fate.
Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth!
— Was found, sole anti-Fabius³ (dare I say)
Who restored things, with no delay at all,
Qui haud cunctando rem restituit! He,
He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,
Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off
Through gaping impotence of sympathy
In ranged Arezzo: what you take for pitch,
Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,
Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands 70
Did yeomen's service, cared not where the gripe
Was more than duly energetic; bruised,
She smarts a little, but her bones are saved
A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek.
How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,

² *With the unblamed Æthiop*: as described by Homer, *Il.* i. 423.

³ *Anti-Fabius*: the antithesis of Q. Fabius Maximus, *qui cunctando restituit rem*, who, in the second Punic war, restored the fortunes of Rome by delay, i.e., by avoiding pitched battles

Censures the honest rude effective strength, —

When sickly dreamers of the impossible
Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat
With eyes wide open!

Did occasion serve,
I could illustrate, if my lords allow;
Quid vetat, what forbids I aptly ask
With Horace, that I give my anger vent,
While I let breathe, no less, and recreate,
The gravity of my Judges, by a tale?

10 A case in point — what though an apologue

Graced by tradition? — possibly a fact:
Tradition must precede all scripture,
words

Serve as our warrant ere our books can be:
So, to tradition back we needs must go
For any fact's authority: and this
Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in muck)
On page of that old lying vanity
Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu:" God be
praised,

I read no Hebrew, — take the thing on
trust:

20 But I believe the writer meant no good
(Blind as he was to truth in some respects)
To our pestiferous and schismatic . . .
well,

My lords' conjecture be the touchstone,
show

The thing for what it is! The author
lacks

Discretion, and his zeal exceeds: but
zeal, —

How rare in our degenerate day! Enough!
Here is the story: fear not, I shall chop
And change a little, else my Jew would
press

All too unmannerly before the Court.

30 It happened once, — begins this foolish
Jew,

Pretending to write Christian history, —
That three, held greatest, best and worst
of men,

Peter and John and Judas, spent a day
In toil and travel through the country-side
On some sufficient business — I suspect,
Suppression of some Molinism i' the bud.
Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with
fatigue,

They reached by nightfall a poor lonely
grange,

Hostel or inn: so, knocked and entered
there.

40 "Your pleasure, great ones?" — "Shelter,
rest and food!"

For shelter, there was one bare room
above;

For rest therein, three beds of bundled
straw:

For food, one wretched starveling fowl, no
more —

Meat for one mouth, but mockery for
three.

"You have my utmost." How should
supper serve?

Peter broke silence: "To the spit with
fowl!

"And while 'tis cooking, sleep! — since
beds there be,

"And, so far, satisfaction of a want.

"Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-time,

"Then each of us narrate the dream he
had,

"And he whose dream shall prove the
happiest, point

"The clearliest out the dreamer as ordained

"Beyond his fellows to receive the fowl,

"Him let our shares be cheerful tribute to,

"His the entire meal, may it do him good!"

Who could dispute so plain a consequence?

So said, so done: each hurried to his
straw,

Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed his
dream, and woke.

"I," commenced John, "dreamed that I
gained the prize

"We all aspire to: the proud place was
mine,

"Throughout the earth and to the end of
time

"I was the Loved Disciple: mine the
meal!"

"But I," proceeded Peter, "dreamed, a
word

"Gave me the headship of our company,
"Made me the Vicar and Vice-gerent,

gave
"The keys of heaven and hell into my
hand,

"And o'er the earth, dominion: mine the
meal!"

"While I," submitted in soft under-tone
The Iscariot — sense of his unworthiness

Turning each eye up to the inmost white —
With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both

lips smack,

"I have had just the pitifullest dream

"That ever proved man meanest of his
mates,

"And born foot-washer and foot-wiper,
nay

"Foot-kisser to each comrade of you all!

"I dreamed I dreamed; and in that mimic
dream

"(Impalpable to dream as dream to fact)
"Methought I meanly chose to sleep no
wink

"But wait until I heard my brethren snore;
"Then stole from couch, slipped noiseless

o'er the planks,

"Slid downstairs, furtively approached the
hearth,

"Found the fowl duly brown, both back
and breast,

"Hissing in harmony with the cricket's
 chirp,
 "Grilled to a point; said no grace but fell
 to,
 "Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.
 "In penitence for which ignoble dream,
 "Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully!
 "Fie on the flesh — be mine the ethereal
 gust,
 "And yours the sublunary sustenance!
 "See that whate'er be left ye give the
 poor!"
 Down the two scuttled, one on other's
 heel,
 Stung by a fell surmise; and found, alack,
 A goodly savour, both the drumstick
 bones,
 And that which henceforth took the appro-
 priate name
 O' the Merry-thought, in memory of the
 fact
 That to keep wide awake is man's best
 dream.
 So, — as was said once of Thucydides
 And his sole joke, "The lion, lo, hath
 laughed!" —
 Just so, the Governor and all that's great
 l' the city, never meant that Innocence
 Should quite starve while Authority sat at
 meat;
 They meant to fling a bone at banquet's
 end:
 Wished well to our Pompilia — in their
 dreams,
 Nor bore the secular sword in vain —
 asleep.
 Just so the Archbishop and all good like
 him
 Went to bed meaning to pour oil and wine
 l' the wounds of her, next day, — but
 long ere day,
 They had burned the one and drunk the
 other, while
 Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest
 Sustained poor Nature in extremity
 By stuffing barley-bread into her mouth,
 Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)
 By the plain homely and straightforward
 way
 Taught him by common sense. Let
 others shriek
 "Oh what refined expedients did we dream
 "Proved us the only fit to help the fair!"
 He cried "A carriage waits, jump in with
 me!"
 And now, this application pardoned,
 lords, —
 This recreative pause and breathing-
 while, —
 Back to beseeingness and gravity!
 For Law steps in: Guido appeals to Law,
 Demands she arbitrate, — does well for
 once.

O Law, of thee how neatly was it said
 By that old Sophocles,¹ thou hast thy seat
 l' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier
 throned!
 Here is a piece of work now, hitherto
 Begun and carried on, concluded near,
 Without an eye-glance cast thy sceptre's
 way;
 And, lo the stumbling and discomfiture!
 Well may you call them "lawless" means,
 men take
 To extricate themselves through mother-
 wit
 When tangled haply in the toils of life! 50
 Guido would try conclusions with his foe,
 Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the
 offence;
 He would recover certain dowry-dues:
 Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,
 What pothor of sword drawn and pistol
 cocked,
 What peddling with forged letters and
 paid spies,
 Politic circumvention! — all to end
 As it began — by loss of the fool's head,
 First in a figure, presently in a fact.
 It is a lesson to mankind at large. 65
 How other were the end, would men be
 sage
 And bear confidingly each quarrel straight,
 O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees!
 How would the children light come and
 prompt go,
 This with a red-cheeked apple for reward,
 The other, peradventure red-cheeked too
 l' the rear, by taste of birch for punish-
 ment.
 No foolish brawling murder any more!
 Peace for the household, practice for the
 Fisc,
 And plenty for the exchequer of my lords! 70
 Too much to hope, in this world: in the
 next,
 Who knows? Since, why should sit the
 Twelve enthroned
 To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be
 judged?
 And 'tis impossible but offences come:
 So, all's one lawsuit, all one long leet-day!²
 Forgive me this digression — that I stand
 Entranced awhile at Law's first beam, out-
 break
 O' the business, when the Count's good
 angel bade
 "Put up thy sword, born enemy to the ear,
 "And let Law listen to thy difference!" 80
 And Law does listen and compose the
 strife,
 Settle the suit, how wisely and how well!
 On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,

¹ Sophocles: *Æd. Col.* 1382, Δίκη ξυμβολος
 Ζητος ἀρχαίους νόμοις.

² Leet-day: day on which the court sits.

Law bends a brow maternally severe,
Implies the worth of perfect chastity,
By fancying the flaw she cannot find.
Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor harms:

'Tis safe to censure levity in youth,
Tax womanhood with indiscretion, sure!
Since toys, permissible to-day, become
Follies to-morrow: prattle shocks in church:

And that curt skirt which lets a maiden skip,

10 The matron changes for a trailing robe.
Mothers may aim a blow with half-shut eyes

Nodding above their spindles by the fire,
And chance to hit some hidden fault, else safe.

Just so, Law hazarded a punishment —
If applicable to the circumstance,
Why, well! if not so apposite, well too.

"Quit the gay range o' the world," I hear
her cry,

"Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound:
"Exchange the gauds of pomp for ashes,
dust!

20 "Leave each mollitious haunt of luxury!
"The golden-garnished silken-couched alcove,

"The many-columned terrace that so tempts

"Feminine soul put foot forth, extend ear
"To fluttering joy of lover's serenade, —

"Leave these for cellular seclusion! mask
"And dance no more, but fast and pray!
avaunt —

"Be burned, thy wicked townsman's sonnet-book!

"Welcome, mild hymnal by . . . some better scribe!

"For the warm arms were wont enfold thy flesh,

30 "Let wire-shirt plough and whiplash discipline!"

If such an exhortation proved, perchance,
Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste,
What harm, since Law has store, can spend
nor miss?

And so, our paragon submits herself,
Goes at command into the holy house,
And, also at command, comes out again:
For, could the effect of such obedience
prove

Too certain, too immediate? Being
healed,

Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed one!

40 Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily vacate

The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda free
To patients plentifully posted round,
Since the whole need not the physician!

Brief,

She may betake her to her parents' place.

Welcome her, father, with wide arms once more,

Motion her, mother, to thy breast again!

For why? Since Law relinquishes the charge,

Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's style,

Rejoice you with Pompilia! golden days,
Redeunt Saturnia regna. Six weeks slip, 5

And she is domiciled in house and home
As though she thence had never budged at all.

And thither let the husband, — joyous, ay,
But contrite also — quick betake himself,
Proud that his dove which lay among the
pots

Hath mued¹ those dingy feathers, —
moulded now,

Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold!

So shall he tempt her to the perch she fled,
Bid to domestic bliss the truant back.

But let him not delay! Time fleets how fast,

And opportunity, the irrevocable,
Once flown will flout him! Is the furrow
traced?

If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,
Darnell for wheat and thistle-beards for grain,

Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,
Will grow apace in combination prompt,
Defraud the husbandman of his desire.

Already — hie! — what murmurs 'monish
now

The laggard? — doubtful, nay, fantastic
bruit

Of such an apparition, such return
Interdum, to anticipate the spouse,

Of Caponsacchi's very self! 'Tis said,
When nights are lone and company is rare,
His visitations brighten winter up.

If so they did — which nowise I believe —
(How can I? — proof abounding that the
priest,

Once fairly at his relegation-place,
Never once left it) still, admit he stole
A midnight march, would fain see friend
again,

Find matter for instruction in the past,
Renew the old adventure in such chat
As cheers a fireside! He was lonely too,
He, too, must need his recreative hour.

Shall it amaze the philosophic mind
If he, long wont the empurpled cup to
quaff,

Have feminine society at will,
Being debarred abruptly from all drink
Save at the spring which Adam used for
wine,

Dreads harm to just the health he hoped to
guard,

¹ *Mued*: moulded.

And, trying abstinence, gains malady?
Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope!
"Little by little break" — (I hear he bids
Master Arcangeli my antagonist,
Who loves good cheer, and may indulge too
much:

So I explain the logic of the plea
Wherewith he opened our proceedings
late) —

"Little by little break a habit, Don,
"Become necessity to feeble flesh!"
And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse
(Which never happened, — but, suppose
it did)

May have been used to dishabituate
By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs
O' the draught of conversation, — heady
stuff,

Brewage which, broached, it took two
days and nights

To properly discuss i' the journey, Sirs!
Such power has second-nature, men call
use,

That un delightful objects get to charm
Instead of chafe: the daily colocynth
Tickles the palate by repeated dose,
Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes a
push,

Although the mill-yoke-wound be smart-
ing yet,

For mill-door bolted on a holiday:
Nor must we marvel here if impulse urge
To talk the old story over now and then,
The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the
haste, —

Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once.
"Here did you bid me twine a rosy
wreath!"

"And there you paid my lips a compli-
ment!"

"Here you admired the tower could be so
tall!"

"And there you likened that of Lebanon
"To the nose of the beloved!" Trifles!
still,

"*Forsan et hæc olim*,"¹ — such trifles
serve

To make the minutes pass in winter-time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee!
For, finally, of all glad circumstance
Should make a prompt return imperative,
What in the world awaits thee, dost sup-
pose?

O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont be-
fall,

What is the hap of our unconscious Count?
That which lights bonfire and sets cask
a-tilt,

¹ *Forsan et hæc olim meminisse iuvabit*:
Virgil, *Æn.* I. 203 — "Perchance one day we
shall take pleasure in recalling even these ex-
periences."

Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.
O admirable, there is born a babe,
A son, an heir, a Franceschini last
And best o' the stock! Pompilia, thine the
palm!

Repaying incredulity with faith,
Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt
With bounty in profuse expenditure,
Pompilia scorns to have the old year end
Without a present shall ring in the new — 51
Bestows on her too-parsimonious lord
An infant for the apple of his eye,
Core of his heart, and crown completing
life,

True *summum bonum* of the earthly lot!
"We," saith ingeniously the sage, "are
born

"Solely that others may be born of us."

So, father, take thy child, for thine that
child,

Oh nothing doubt! In wedlock born, law
holds

Baseness impossible: since "*filius est*
"*Quem nuptiæ demonstrant*," twits the text 60
Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares!

O faith, where art thou flown from out the
world?

Already on what an age of doubt we fall!
Instead of each disputing for the prize,

The babe is bandied here from that to this.
Whose the babe? "*Cujum pecus*?"²

Guido's lamb?

"*An Melibæi*?" Nay, but of the priest!

"*Non sed Ægonis*!" Someone must be
sire:

And who shall say, in such a puzzling
strait,

If there were not vouchsafed some miracle 70
To the wife who had been harassed and
abused

More than enough by Guido's family
For non-production of the promised fruit

Of marriage? What if Nature, I demand,
Touched to the quick by taunts upon her
sloth,

Had roused herself, put forth recondite
power,

Bestowed this birth to vindicate her sway,
Like the strange favour, Maro memorised

As granted Aristæus when his hive
Lay empty of the swarm? not one more 80
bee —

Not one more babe to Franceschini's
house!

And lo, a new birth filled the air with joy,
Sprung from the bowels of the generous
steer,

A novel son and heir rejoiced the Count!

² *Cujum pecus*, &c.: a quotation from Virgil,
Ecl. 3, 1, except that *sed* should be *verum*;

"Whose is this flock, — Melibæus?" "Nay.
Ægon's."

Spontaneous generation, need I prove,
Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch?
Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair certain
weeks

In water, there will be produced a snake;
Spontaneous product of the horse, which
horse

Happens to be the representative —
Now that I think on't — of Arezzo's self,
The very city our conception blessed:
Is not a prancing horse the City-arms?

• What sane eye fails to see coincidence?
Cur ego, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,
Desperem fieri sine conjuge
Mater — how well the Ovidian distich
suits! —

Et parere intacto dummodo
Casta viro? Such miracle was wrought!
Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,
The babe in question neither took the
name

Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor
Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but
20 Gaetano — last saint of our hierarchy,
And newest namer for a thing so new!
What other motive could have prompted
choice?

Therefore be peace again: exult, ye hills!
Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song!
Incipe, *parve puer*, begin, small boy,
Risu cognoscere patrem, with a laugh
To recognise thy parent! Nor do thou
Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace!
Nec anceps hære, pater, puero

30 *Cognoscendo* — one may well eke out the
prayer!

In vain! The perverse Guido doubts his
eyes,

Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive.
Because his house is swept and garnished
now,

He, having summoned seven like himself,
Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,
And make the last worse than the first,
indeed!

Is he content? We are. No further
blame

O' the man and murder! They were stig-
matised

Befittingly: the Court heard long ago

40 My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring
full,

Has long since swept like surge, i' the
simile

Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,
And whelmed alike client and advocate:
His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,
On him I am not tempted to waste word.
Yet though my purpose holds, — which
was and is

And solely shall be to the very end,
To draw the true *effigies* of a saint,
Do justice to perfection in the sex, —

Yet let not some gross pamperer of the
flesh

And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,
Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit
Rather than law, — he never had, to
lose —

Let not such advocate object to me
I leave my proper function of attack!

"What's this to Bacchus?" — (in the
classic phrase,

Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.
O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to
make

Their blessing void — *beati pauperes!*

By painting saintship I depicture sin:
Beside my pearl, I prove how black thy
jet,

And, through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's
crime.

Back to her, then, — with but one beauty
more,

End we our argument, — one crowning
grace

Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.

For to the last Pompilia played her part,
Used the right means to the permissible
end,

And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's
thrust,

She, while he stabbed her, simulated
death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,
Obtained herself a respite, four days'
grace,

Whereby she told her story to the world,
Enabled me to make the present speech,
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its
last,

Gurgle its choked remonstrance: snake,
hiss free!

Oh, that's the objection? And to whom?
— not her

But me, forsooth — as, in the very act
Of both confession and (what followed
close)

Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,
Babble to sympathising he and she
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed, —
As this were found at variance with my
tale,

Falsified all I have adduced for truth,
Admitted not one peccadillo here,
Pretended to perfection, first and last,
O' the whole procedure — perfect in the
end,

Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything,
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,
Reason away and show his skill about!
— A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,
Must to be fancied, scarcely to be wished

And, anyhow, unpleadable in court!
 "How reconcile," gasps Malice, "that
 with this?"

Your "this," friend, is extraneous to the
 law,

Comes of men's outside meddling, the un-
 skilled

Interposition of such fools as press
 Out of their province. Must I speak my
 mind?

Far better had Pompilia died o' the spot
 Than found a tongue to wag and shame
 the law,

Shame most of all herself, — could friend-
 ship fail

And advocacy lie less on the alert:
 But no, they shall protect her to the end!
 Do I credit the alleged narration? No!
 Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself?
 Still, no! Clear up what seems discrep-
 ancy?

The means abound: art's long, though
 time is short;

So, keeping me in compass, all I urge
 Is — since, confession at the point of
 death,

Nam in articulo mortis, with the Church
 Passes for statement honest and sincere,
Nemo presumitur reus esse, — then,
 If sure that all affirmed would be believed,
 'Twas charity, in her so circumstanced,
 To spend the last breath in one effort more
 for universal good of friend and foe:
 And, — by pretending utter innocence,
 Nay, freedom from each foible we for-
 give, —

Re-integrate — not solely her own fame,
 But do the like kind office for the priest
 Whom telling the crude truth about might
 vex,

Haply expose to peril, abbreviate
 Indeed the long career of usefulness
 Presumably before him: while her lord,
 Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law, —
 What mercy to the culprit if, by just
 The gift of such a full certificate
 Of his immitigable guiltiness,
 She stifled in him the absurd conceit
 Of murder as it were a mere revenge
 — Stopped confirmation of that jealousy
 Which, did she but acknowledge the first
 flaw,

The faintest foible, had emboldened him
 To battle with the charge, baulk peni-
 tence,

Bar preparation for impending fate!
 Whereas, persuade him that he slew a saint
 Who sinned not even where she may have
 sinned,

You urge him all the brisklier to repent
 Of most and least and aught and every-
 thing!

Still, if this view of mine content you not,

Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood
 here,

We come to our *Triarii*,¹ last resource: 54
 We fall back on the inexpugnable,
 Submitting, — she confessed before she
 talked!

The sacrament obliterates the sin:
 What is not, — was not, therefore, in a
 sense.

Lt Molinists distinguish, "Souls washed
 white

"But red once, still show pinkish to the
 eye!"

We say, abolishment is nothingness,
 And nothingness has neither head nor tail,
 End nor beginning! Better estimate
 Exorbitantly, than disparage aught 60
 Of the efficacy of the act, I hope!

Solvuntur tabulae?² May we laugh and
 go?

Well, — not before (in filial gratitude
 To Law, who, mighty mother, waves adieu)
 We take on us to vindicate Law's self!
 For, — yea, Sirs, — curb the start, curtail
 the stare! —

Remains that we apologise for haste
 I' the Law, our lady who here bristles up
 "Blame my procedure? Could the Court
 mistake?

"(Which were indeed a misery to think) 76
 "Did not my sentence in the former stage
 "O' the business bear a title plain enough?
 "*Decretum*" — I translate it word for
 word —

"Decreed: the priest, for his complicity
 "'I' the flight and deviation of the dame,
 "'As well as for unlawful intercourse,
 "'Is banished three years:' crime and
 penalty,
 "Declared alike. If he be taxed with
 guilt,

"How can you call Pompilia innocent?
 "If both be innocent, have I been just?" 80

Gently, O mother, judge men — whose
 mistake

Is in the mere misapprehensiveness!
 The *Titulus* atop of your decree
 Was but to ticket there the kind of charge
 You in good time would arbitrate upon.
 Title is one thing, — arbitration's self,
Probatio, quite another possibly.
Subsistit, there holds good the old response,
Responsio tradita, we must not stick,
Quod non sit attendendus Titulus, 94
 To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but the Proof,

¹ *Triarii*: the third rank in the old forma-
 tion of the Roman legion, containing the oldest
 soldiers, and only called upon at the crisis of a
 battle.

² *Solvuntur tabulae*: from Horace, *Sat. II.*
i., 86 — *solvuntur risu tabulae*, "the court will
 break up in laughter."

Resultans ex processu, the result
O' the Trial, and the style of punishment,
Et pœna per sententiam imposita.
All is tentative, till the sentence come:
An indication of what men expect,
But nowise an assurance they shall find.
Lords, what if we permissibly relax
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus
bids,

- Relieve our gravity at labour's close?
10 I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a
draught,
Look for a wine-shop, find it by the
bough
Projecting as to say "Here wine is sold!"
So much I know, — "sold:" but what sort
of wine?
Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made or
foreign drink?
That much must I discover by myself.
"Wine is sold," quoth the bough, "but
good or bad,
"Find, and inform us when you smack your
lips!"
Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,
To show she entertains you with such
case

- 20 About such crime. Come in! she pours,
you quaff.
You find the Priest good liquor in the
main,
But heady and provocative of brawls:
Remand the residue to flask once more,
Lay it low where it may deposit lees,
I' the cellar: thence produce it presently,
Three years the brighter and the better!

Thus,

- Law's son, have I bestowed my filial help,
And thus I end, *tenax proposito*;
Point to point as I purposed have I drawn
30 Pompilia, and implied as terribly
Guido: so, gazing, let the world crown
Law —

Able once more, despite my impotence,
And helped by the acumen of the Court,
To eliminate, display, make triumph
truth!
What other prize than truth were worth
the pains?

There's my oration — much exceeds in
length
That famed panegyric of Isocrates,
They say it took him fifteen years to
pen.

- But all those ancients could say anything!
40 He put in just what rushed into his head:
While I shall have to prune and pare and
print.
This comes of being born in modern
times
With priests for auditory. Still, it pays.

X. — THE POPE.

LIKE Ahasuerus, that shrewd prince,
I will begin, — as is, these seven years now,
My daily wont, — and read a History
(Written by one whose deft right hand was
dust

To the last digit, ages ere my birth)
Of all my predecessors, Popes of Rome:
For though mine ancient early dropped 50
the pen,

Yet others picked it up and wrote it dry,
Since of the making books there is no end.
And so I have the Papacy complete
From Peter first to Alexander last;
Can question each and take instruction so.
Have I to dare? — I ask, how dared this
Pope?

To suffer? — Suchanone, how suffered he?
Being about to judge, as now, I seek
How judged once, well or ill, some other
Pope;

Study some signal judgment that subsists 60
To blaze on, or else blot, the page which
seals

The sum up of what gain or loss to God
Came of His one more Vicar in the world.
So, do I find example, rule of life;
So, square and set in order the next page
Shall be stretched smooth o'er my own
funeral cyst.

Eight hundred years exact before the year
I was made Pope, men made Formosus
Pope,

Say Sigebert and other chroniclers.
Ere I confirm or quash the Trial here
Of Guido Franceschini and his friends,
Read, — How there was a ghastly Trial
once

Of a dead man by a live man, and both,
Popes:

Thus — in the antique penman's very
phrase.

"Then Stephen, Pope and seventh of the
name,

"Cried out, in synod as he sat in state,
"While choler quivered on his brow and
beard,

"Come into court, Formosus, thou lost
wretch,

"That claimedst to be late Pope as even
I!"

"And at the word the great door of the
church

"Flew wide, and in they brought For-
mosus' self,

"The body of him, dead, even as em-
balsmed

"And buried duly in the Vatican
"Eight months before, exhumed thus for
the nonce.

- 'They set it, that dead body of a Pope,
 'Clothed in pontific vesture now again,
 'Upright on Peter's chair as if alive.
- 'And Stephen, springing up, cried furiously
 "'Bishop of Porto, wherefore didst presume
 "'To leave that see and take this Roman see,
 "'Exchange the lesser for the greater see,
 "'—A thing against the canons of the Church?'
- "Then one — (a Deacon who, observing forms,
 "Was placed by Stephen to repel the charge,
 "Be advocate and mouthpiece of the corpse) —
 "Spoke as he dared, set stammeringly forth
 "With white lips and dry tongue, — as but a youth,
 "For frightful was the corpse-face to behold, —
 "How nowise lacked there precedent for this.
- "But when, for his last precedent of all,
 "Emboldened by the Spirit, out he blurts
 "'And, Holy Father, didst not thou thyself
 "'Vacate the lesser for the greater see,
 "'Half a year since change Arago for Rome?'
 "'— Ye have the sin's defence now, Synod mine!
 "'Shrieks Stephen in a beastly froth of rage:
 "'Judge now betwixt him dead and me alive!
 "'Hath he intruded, or do I pretend?
 "'Judge, judge! — breaks wavelike one whole foam of wrath.
- "Whereupon they, being friends and followers,
 "Said 'Ay, thou art Christ's Vicar, and not he!
 "'Away with what is frightful to behold!
 "'This act was uncanonic and a fault.'
- "Then, swallowed up in rage, Stephen exclaimed
 "'So, guilty! So, remains I punish guilt!
 "'He is unpoped, and all he did I damn;
 "'The Bishop, that ordained him, I degrade:
 "'Depose to laics those he raised to priests:
 "'What they have wrought is mischief nor shall stand,
 "'It is confusion, let it vex no more!
 "'Since I revoke, annul and abrogate
 "'All his decrees in all kinds: they are void!
- "'In token whereof and warning to the world,
 "'Strip me yon miscreant of those robes 48
 "usurped,
 "'And clothe him with vile serge befitting such!
 "'Then hale the carrion to the marketplace:
 "'Let the town-hangman chop from his right hand
 "'Those same three fingers which he blessed withal;
 "'Next cut the head off once was crowned forsooth:
 "'And last go fling them, fingers, head and trunk,
 "'To Tiber that my Christian fish may sup!
 "'— Either because of ΙΧΘΥΣ which means Fish
 "'And very aptly symbolises Christ,
 "'Or else because the Pope is Fisherman, 50
 "'And seals with Fisher's-signet.
- "Anyway,
 "So said, so done: himself, to see it done,
 "Followed the corpse they trailed from street to street
 "Till into Tiber wave they threw the thing.
- "The people, crowded on the banks to see,
 "Were loud or mute, wept or laughed, cursed or jeered,
 "According as the deed addressed their sense;
 "A scandal verily: and out spake a Jew
 "'Wot ye your Christ had vexed our Herod thus?'
- "Now when, Formosus being dead a year, 60
 "His judge Pope Stephen tasted death in turn,
 "Made captive by the mob and strangled straight,
 "Romanus, his successor for a month,
 "Did make protest Formosus was with God,
 "Holy, just, true in thought and word and deed.
- "Next Theodore, who reigned but twenty days,
 "Therein convoked a synod, whose decree
 "Did reinstate, repope the late unpoped,
 "And do away with Stephen as accused. 73
 "So that when presently certain fisher-folk
 "(As if the queasy river could not hold
 "Its swallowed Jonas, but discharged the meal)
 "Produced the timely product of their nets,
 "The mutilated man, Formosus, — saved
 "From putrefaction by the embalmer's spice,
 "Or, as some said, by sanctity of flesh: —

- "Why, lay the body again," bade Theodore,
 "Among his predecessors, in the church
 "And burial-place of Peter!" which was done.
 "And," addeth Luitprand, "many of repute,
 "Pious and still alive, avouch to me
 "That, as they bore the body up the aisle,
 "The saints in imaged row bowed each his head
 "For welcome to a brother-saint come back."
 "As for Romanus and this Theodore,
 to "These two Popes, through the brief reign granted each,
 "Could but initiate what John came to close
 "And give the dual stamp to: he it was
 "Ninth of the name, (I follow the best guides)
 "Who, — in full synod at Ravenna held
 "With Bishops seventy-four, and present too
 "Eude King of France with his Archbishopry, —
 "Did condemn Stephen, anathematise
 "The disinterment, and make all blots blank,
 "For," argueth here Auxilius in a place
 to "De Ordinationibus," precedents
 "Had been, no lack, before Formosus long,
 "Of Bishops so transferred from see to see, —
 "Marinus, for example:" read the tract.
 "But, after John, came Sergius, reaffirmed
 "The right of Stephen, cursed Formosus, nay
 "Cast out, some say, his corpse a second time.
 "And here, — because the matter went to ground,
 "Fretted by new griefs, other cares of the age, —
 "Here is the last pronouncing of the Church,
 to "Her sentence that subsists unto this day.
 "Yet constantly opinion hath prevailed
 "I' the Church, Formosus was a holy man."
- Which of the judgments was infallible?
 Which of my predecessors spoke for God?
 And what availed Formosus that this cursed,
 That blessed, and then this other cursed again?
 "Fear ye not those whose power can kill the body
 "And not the soul," saith Christ, "but rather those
- "Can cast both soul and body into hell!"
 John judged thus in Eight Hundred Ninety 44
 Eight,
 Exact eight hundred years ago to-day
 When, sitting in his stead, Vice-gerent here,
 I must give judgment on my own behoof.
 So worked the predecessor: now, my turn!
 In God's name! Once more on this earth of God's,
 While twilight lasts and time wherein to work,
 I take His staff with my uncertain hand
 And stay my six and fourscore years, my due
 Labour and sorrow, on His judgment-seat,
 And forthwith think, speak, act, in place of 50
 Him —
 The Pope for Christ. Once more appeal is made
 From man's assize to mine: I sit and see
 Another poor weak trembling human wretch
 Pushed by his fellows, who pretend the right,
 Up to the gulf which, where I gaze, begins
 From this world to the next, — gives way and way,
 Just on the edge over the awful dark:
 With nothing to arrest him but my feet.
 He catches at me with convulsive face,
 Cries "Leave to live the natural minute 60
 more!"
 While hollowly the avengers echo "Leave?"
 "None! So has he exceeded man's due share
 "In man's fit licence, wrung by Adam's fall,
 "To sin and yet not surely die, — that we,
 "All of us sinful, all with need of grace,
 "All chary of our life, — the minute more
 "Or minute less of grace which saves a soul, —
 "Bound to make common cause with who craves time,
 " — We yet protest against the exorbitance
 "Of sin in this one sinner, and demand 7
 "That his poor sole remaining piece of time
 "Be plucked from out his clutch: put him to death!
 "Punish him now! As for the weal or woe
 "Hereafter, God grant mercy! Man be just,
 "Nor let the felon boast he went scot-free!
 And I am bound, the solitary judge,
 To weigh the worth, decide upon the plea,
 And either hold a hand out, or withdraw
 A foot and let the wretch drift to the fall.
 Ay, and while thus I dally, dare perchance
 Put fancies for a comfort 'twixt this calm
 And yonder passion that I have to bear, —

As if reprieve were possible for both
 Prisoner and Pope, — how easy were re-
 prieve!
 A touch o' the hand-bell here, a hasty
 word
 To those who wait, and wonder they wait
 long,
 I' the passage there, and I should gain the
 life! —
 Yea, though I flatter me with fancy thus,
 I know it is but nature's craven-trick.
 The case is over, judgment at an end,
 And all things done now and irrevocable:
 A more dead man is Franceschini here,
 Even as Formosus centuries ago.
 I have won through this sombre wintry
 day,
 With winter in my soul beyond the world's,
 Over these dismalest of documents
 Which drew night down on me ere eve
 befell, —
 Pleadings and counter-pleadings, figure of
 fact
 Beside fact's self, these summaries to-
 wit, —
 How certain three were slain by certain
 five:
 I read here why it was, and how it went,
 And how the chief o' the five preferred ex-
 cuse,
 And how law rather chose defence should
 lie, —
 What argument he urged by wary word
 When free to play off wile, start subterfuge,
 And what the unguarded groan told, tort-
 ure's feat
 When law grew brutal, outbroke, over-
 bore
 And glutted hunger on the truth, at last, —
 No matter for the flesh and blood between.
 All's a clear rede and no more riddle
 now.
 Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in
 these —
 Not absolutely in a portion, yet
 Evolvable from the whole: evolved at last
 Painfully, held tenaciously by me.
 Therefore there is not any doubt to clear
 When I shall write the brief word pres-
 ently
 And chink the hand-bell, which I pause
 to do.
 Irresolute? Not I, more than the mound
 With the pine-trees on it yonder! Some
 surmise,
 Perchance, that since man's wit is fallible,
 Mine may fail here? Suppose it so, —
 what then?
 Say, — Guido, I count guilty, there's no
 babe
 So guiltless, for I misconceive the man!
 What's in the chance should move me
 from my mind?
 If, as I walk in a rough country-side,

Peasants of mine cry "Thou art he can
 help,
 "Lord of the land and counted wise to
 boot:
 "Look at our brother, strangling in his
 foam,
 "He fell so where we find him, — prove
 thy worth!"
 I may presume, pronounce, "A frenzy-fit,
 "A falling-sickness or a fever-stroke!
 "Breathe a vein, copiously let blood at 58
 once!"
 So perishes the patient, and anon
 I hear my peasants — "All was error,
 lord!
 "Our story, thy prescription: for there
 crawled
 "In due time from our hapless brother's
 breast
 "The serpent which had stung him: bleed-
 ing slew
 "Whom a prompt cordial had restored to
 health."
 What other should I say than "God so
 willed:
 "Mankind is ignorant, a man am I:
 "Call ignorance my sorrow, not my sin!"
 So and not otherwise, in after-time, 64
 If some acuter wit, fresh probing, sound
 This multifarious mass of words and
 deeds
 Deeper, and reach through guilt to inno-
 cence,
 I shall face Guido's ghost nor blench a
 jot.
 "God who set me to judge thee, meted
 out
 "So much of judging faculty, no more:
 "Ask Him if I was slack in use thereof!"
 I hold a heavier fault imputable
 Inasmuch as I changed a chaplain once,
 For no cause, — no, if I must bare my 70
 heart, —
 Save that he snuffled somewhat saying
 mass.
 For I am ware it is the seed of act,
 God holds appraising in His hollow palm,
 Not act grown great thence on the world
 below,
 Leafage and branchage, vulgar eyes ad-
 mire.
 Therefore I stand on my integrity,
 Nor fear at all: and if I hesitate,
 It is because I need to breathe awhile,
 Rest, as the human right allows, review
 In tent the little seeds of act, my tree, — 8c
 The thought, which, clothed in deed, I
 give the world
 At chink of bell and push of arrased door.
 O pale departure, dim disgrace of day!
 Winter's in wane, his vengeful worst art
 thou,
 To dash the boldness of advancing March!

- Thy chill persistent rain has purged our streets
 Of gossipry; pert tongue and idle ear
 By this, consort 'neath archway, portico.
 But wheresoe'er Rome gathers in the grey,
 Two names now snap and flash from mouth to mouth —
 (Sparks, flint and steel strike) Guido and the Pope.
 By this same hour to-morrow eve — aha,
 How do they call him? — the sagacious Swede
 Who finds by figures how the chances prove,
 10 Why one comes rather than another thing,
 As, say, such dots turn up by throw of dice,
 Or, if we dip in Virgil here and there
 And prick for such a verse, when such shall point.
 Take this Swede, tell him, hiding name and rank,
 Two men are in our city this dull eve;
 One doomed to death, — but hundreds in such plight
 Slip aside, clean escape by leave of law
 Which leans to mercy in this latter time;
 Moreover in the plenitude of life
 20 Is he, with strength of limb and brain adroit,
 Presumably of service here: beside,
 The man is noble, backed by nobler friends:
 Nay, they so wish him well, the city's self
 Makes common cause with who — house-magistrate,
 Patron of hearth and home, domestic lord —
 But ruled his own, let aliens cavil. Die?
 He'll bribe a gaoler or break prison first!
 Nay, a sedition may be helpful, give
 Hint to the mob to batter wall, burn gate,
 30 And bid the favourite malefactor march.
 Calculate now these chances of escape!
 "It is not probable, but well may be."
 Again, there is another man, weighed now
 By twice eight years beyond the seven-times-ten,
 Appointed overweight to break our branch.
 And this man's loaded branch lifts, more than snow,
 All the world's cark and care, though a bird's nest
 Were a superfluous burthen: notably
 Hath he been pressed, as if his age were youth,
 From to-day's dawn till now that day departs,
 Trying one question with true sweat of soul,
 "Shall the said doomed man fitlier die or live?"
 When a straw swallowed in his posset, stool
- Stumbled on where his path lies, any puff
 That's incident to such a smoking flax,
 Hurries the natural end and quenches him!
 Now calculate, thou sage, the chances here,
 Say, which shall die the sooner, this or that?
 "That, possibly, this in all likelihood."
 I thought so: yet thou tripp'st, my foreign friend!
 No, it will be quite otherwise, — to-day
 Is Guido's last: my term is yet to run.
 But say the Swede were right, and I forthwith
 Acknowledge a prompt summons and lie dead:
 Why, then I stand already in God's face
 And hear "Since by its fruit a tree is judged,
 "Show me thy fruit, the latest act of thine!
 "For in the last is summed the first and all, —
 "What thy life last put heart and soul into,
 "There shall I taste thy product." I 60
 must plead
 This condemnation of a man to-day.
 Not so! Expect nor question nor reply
 At what we figure as God's judgment-bar!
 None of this vile way by the barren words
 Which, more than any deed, characterise
 Man as made subject to a curse: no speech —
 That still bursts o'er some lie which lurks inside,
 As the split skin across the coppery snake,
 And most denotes man! since, in all be-
 side,
 In hate or lust or guile or unbelief, 7
 Out of some core of truth the excrescence comes,
 And, in the last resort, the man may urge
 "So was I made, a weak thing that gave way
 "To truth, to impulse only strong since true,
 "And hated, lusted, used guile, forwent faith."
 But when man walks the garden of this world
 For his own solace, and, unchecked by law,
 Speaks or keeps silence as himself sees fit,
 Without the least incumbency to lie,
 — Why, can he tell you what a rose is like, 8
 Or how the birds fly, and not slip to false
 Though truth serve better? Man must tell his mate
 Of you, me and himself, knowing he lies,
 Knowing his fellow knows the same, — will think
 "He lies, it is the method of a man!"

And yet will speak for answer "It is truth"
 To him who shall rejoin "Again a lie!"
 Therefore these filthy rags of speech, this
 coil
 Of statement, comment, query and re-
 sponse,
 Tatters all too contaminate for use,
 Have no renewing: He the Truth, is, too,
 The Word. We men, in our degree, may
 know
 There, simply, instantaneously, as here
 After long time and amid many lies,
 Whatever we dare think we know indeed
 — That I am I, as He is He, — what
 else?
 — But be man's method for man's life at
 least!
 Wherefore, Antonio Pignatelli, thou
 My ancient self, who wast no Pope so long
 But studiedst God and man, the many
 years
 I' the school, i' the cloister, in the diocese
 Domestic, legate-rule in foreign lands, —
 Thou other force in those old busy days
 Than this grey ultimate decrepitude, —
 Yet sensible of fires that more and more
 Visit a soul, in passage to the sky,
 Left nakeder than when flesh-robe was
 new —
 Thou, not Pope but the mere old man o'
 the world,
 Supposed inquisitive and dispassionate,
 Wilt thou, the one whose speech I some-
 what trust,
 Question the after-me, this self now Pope,
 Hear his procedure, criticise his work?
 Wise in its generation is the world.
 This is why Guido is found reprobate.
 I see him furnished forth for his career,
 On starting for the life-chance in our world,
 With nearly all we count sufficient help:
 Body and mind in balance, a sound frame,
 A solid intellect: the wit to seek,
 Wisdom to choose, and courage where-
 withal
 To deal in whatsoever circumstance
 Should minister to man. make life succeed.
 Oh, and much drawback! what were
 earth without?
 Is this our ultimate stage, or starting-
 place
 To try man's foot, if it will creep or climb,
 'Mid obstacles in seeming, points that
 prove
 Advantage for who vaults from low to
 high
 And makes the stumbling-block a stepping-
 stone?
 So, Guido, born with appetite, lacks food:
 Is poor, who yet could deftly play-off
 wealth:
 Straitened, whose limbs are restless till at
 large.

He, as he eyes each outlet of the cirque
 And narrow penfold for probation, pines
 After the good things just outside its grate,
 With less monition, fainter conscience-
 twitch,
 Rarer instinctive qualm at the first feel
 Of greed unseemly, prompting grasp
 undue,
 Than nature furnishes her main man-
 kind, —
 Making it harder to do wrong than right
 The first time, careful lest the common ear
 Break measure, miss the outstep of life's
 march.
 Wherein I see a trial fair and fit
 For one else too unfairly fenced about,
 Set above sin, beyond his fellows here:
 Guarded from the arch-tempter all must 6:
 fight,
 By a great birth, traditionary name,
 Diligent culture, choice companionship,
 Above all, conversancy with the faith
 Which puts forth for its base of doctrine
 just
 "Man is born nowise to content himself,
 "But please God." He accepted such a
 rule,
 Recognised man's obedience; and the
 Church,
 Which simply is such rule's embodiment
 He clave to, he held on by, — nay, indeed,
 Near pushed inside of, deep as layman 7:
 durst,
 Professed so much of priesthood as might
 sue
 For priest's-exemption where the layman
 sinned, —
 Got his arm frocked which, bare, the law
 would bruise.
 Hence, at this moment, what's his last
 resource,
 His extreme stay and utmost stretch of
 hope
 But that, — convicted of such crime as
 law
 Wipes not away save with a worldling's
 blood, —
 Guido, the three-parts consecrate, may
 'scape?
 Nay, the portentous brothers of the man
 Are veritably priests, protected each 8:
 May do his murder in the Church's pale,
 Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo!
 This is the man proves irreligiousest
 Of all mankind, religion's parasite!
 This may forsooth plead dinned ear, jaded
 sense,
 The vice o' the watcher who bides near the
 bell,
 Sleeps sound because the clock is vigilant,
 And cares not whether it be shade or shine,
 Doling out day and night to all men else!
 Why was the choice o' the man to niche 9:
 himself

Perversely 'neath the tower where Time's
own tongue

Thus undertakes to sermonise the world?

Why, but because the solemn is safe too,

The belfry proves a fortress of a sort,

Has other uses than to teach the hour:

Turns sunscreen, paravent and ombrifuge¹

To whoso seeks a shelter in its pale,

—Ay, and attractive to unwary folk

Who gaze at storied portal, statued spire

10 And go home with full head but empty

purse,

Nor dare suspect the sacristan the thief!

Shall Judas, — hard upon the donor's

heel,

To filch the fragments of the basket, —

plead

He was too near the preacher's mouth,

nor sat

Attent with fifties in a company?

No, — closer to promulgated decree,

Clearer the censure of default. Proceed!

I find him bound, then, to begin life well;

Fortified by propitious circumstance,

20 Great birth, good breeding, with the

Church for guide,

How lives he? Cased thus in a coat of

proof,

Mailed like a man-at-arms, though all the

while

A puny starveling, — does the breast pant

big,

The limb swell to the limit, emptiness

Strive to become solidity indeed?

Rather, he shrinks up like the ambiguous

fish,

Detaches flesh from shell and outside show,

And steals by moonlight (I have seen the

thing)

In and out, now to prey and now to skulk.

30 Armour he boasts when a wave breaks

on beach,

Or bird stoops for the prize: with peril

nigh, —

The man of rank, the much-befriended-

man,

The man almost affiliate to the Church,

Such is to deal with, let the world beware!

Does the world recognise, pass prudently?

Do tides abate and sea-fowl hunt? the

deep?

Already is the slug from out its mew,

Ignobly faring with all loose and free,

Sand-fly and slush-worm at their garbage-

feast,

40 A naked blotch no better than they all:

Guido has dropped nobility, slipped the

Church,

Plays trickster if not cut-purse, body and

soul

¹ *Paravent and ombrifuge*: protection against wind and rain,

Prostrate among the filthy feeders — laugh!
And when Law takes him by surprise at

last,

Catches the foul thing on its carrion-prey,

Behold, he points to shell left high and dry,

Pleads "But the case out yonder is myself!"

Nay, it is thou, Law prongs amid thy peers,

Congenial vermin; that was none of thee,

Thine outside, — give it to the soldier-⁵⁰

crab!

For I find this black mark impinge the

man,

That he believes in just the vile of life.

Low instinct, base pretension, are these

truth?

Then, that aforesaid armour, probity

He figures in, is falsehood scale on scale;

Honour and faith, — a lie and a disguise,

Probably for all livers in this world,

Certainly for himself! All say good words

To who will hear, all do thereby bad deeds

To who must undergo; so thrive man-⁶⁰

kind!

See this habitual creed exemplified

Most in the last deliberate act; as last,

So, very sum and substance of the soul

Of him that planned and leaves one perfect

piece,

The sin brought under jurisdiction now,

Even the marriage of the man: this act

I sever from his life as sample, show

For Guido's self, intend to test him by,

As, from a cup filled fairly at the fount,

By the components we decide enough

Or to let flow as late, or stanch the source.

He purposes this marriage, I remark,

On no one motive that should prompt

thereto —

Farthest, by consequence, from ends alleged

Appropriate to the action; so they were:

The best, he knew and feigned, the worst he

took.

Not one permissible impulse moves the

man,

From the mere liking of the eye and ear,

To the true longing of the heart that

loves,

No trace of these: but all to instigate,

Is what sinks man past level of the brute

Whose appetite if brutish is a truth.

All is the lust for money: to get gold, —

Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder!

Make

Body and soul wring gold out, lured within

The clutch of hate by love, the trap's pre-

tence!

What good else get from bodies and from

souls?

This got, there were some life to lead there-

by,

— What, where or how, appreciate those

who tell

How the toad lives: it lives, — enough for me!
 To get this good, — with but a groan or so,
 Then, silence of the victims, — were the feat.
 He foresaw, made a picture in his mind, —
 Of father and mother stunned and echoless
 To the blow, as they lie staring at fate's jaws
 Their folly danced into, till the woe fell;
 Edged in a month by strenuous cruelty
 From even the poor nook whence they watched the wolf
 Feast on their heart, the lamb-like child his prey;
 Plundered to the last remnant of their wealth,
 (What daily pittance pleased the plunderer dole)
 Hunted forth to go hide head, starve and die,
 And leave the pale awe-stricken wife, past hope
 Of help i' the world now, mute and motionless,
 His slave, his chattel, to first use, then destroy.
 All this, he bent mind how to bring about,
 Put plain in act and life, as painted plain,
 So have success, reach crown of earthly good,
 In this particular enterprise of man,
 By marriage — undertaken in God's face
 With all these lies so opposite God's truth,
 For end so other than man's end.

Thus schemes

Guido, and thus would carry out his scheme:
 But when an obstacle first blocks the path,
 When he finds none may boast monopoly
 Of lies and trick i' the tricking lying world, —
 That sorry timid natures, even this sort
 O' the Comparini, want nor trick nor lie
 Proper to the kind, — that as the gor-crow treats
 The bramble-finch so treats the finch the moth,
 And the great Guido is minutely matched
 By this same couple, — whether true or false
 The revelation of Pompilia's birth,
 Which in a moment brings his scheme to nought, —
 Then, he is piqued, advances yet a stage,
 Leaves the low region to the finch and fly,
 Soars to the zenith whence the fiercer fowl
 May dare the inimitable swoop. I see.
 He draws now on the curious crime, the fine
 Felicity and flower of wickedness;
 Determines, by the utmost exercise
 Of violence, made safe and sure by craft,

To satiate malice, pluck one last arch-pang
 From the parents, else would triumph out of reach,
 By punishing their child, within reach yet,
 Who, by thought, word or deed, could nowise wrong
 I' the matter that now moves him. So plans he,
 Always subordinating (note the point!)
 Revenge, the manlier sin, to interest 50
 The meaner, — would pluck pang forth, but unclench
 No gripe in the act, let fall no money-piece.
 Hence a plan for so plaguing, body and soul,
 His wife, so putting, day by day, hour by hour,
 The untried torture to the untouched place,
 As must precipitate an end foreseen,
 Goad her into some plain revolt, most like
 Plunge upon patent suicidal shame,
 Death to herself, damnation by rebound
 To those whose hearts he, holding hers, 60 holds still:
 Such plan as, in its bad completeness, shall
 Ruin the three together and alike,
 Yet leave himself in luck and liberty,
 No claim renounced, no right a forfeiture,
 His person unendangered, his good fame
 Without a flaw, his pristine worth intact, —
 While they, with all their claims and rights that cling,
 Shall forthwith crumble off him every side,
 Scorched into dust, a plaything for the winds.

As when, in our Campagna, there is fired 70
 The nest-like work that overruns a hut;
 And, as the thatch burns here, there, everywhere,
 Even to the ivy and wild vine, that bound
 And blessed the home where men were happy once,
 There rises gradual, black amid the blaze,
 Some grim and unscathed nucleus of the nest, —
 Some old malicious tower, some obscene tomb
 They thought a temple in their ignorance,
 And clung about and thought to lean upon—
 There laughs it o' their ravage, — where 80 are they?
 So did his cruelty burn life about,
 And lay the ruin bare in dreadfulfulness,
 Try the persistency of torment so
 Upon the wife, that, at extremity,
 Some crisis brought about by fire and flame,
 The patient frenzy-stung must needs break loose,
 Fly anyhow, find refuge anywhere,
 Even in the arms of who should front her first

No monster but a man — while nature shrieked

"Or thus escape, or die!" The spasm arrived,

Not the escape by way of sin, — O God, Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest, from Thy hand?

Therefore she lay resigned to die, — so far The simple cruelty was foiled. Why then, Craft to the rescue, let craft supplement Cruelty and show hell a masterpiece! Hence this consummate lie, this love-intrigue,

10 Unmanly simulation of a sin, With place and time and circumstance to suit —

These letters false beyond all forgery — Not just handwriting and mere authorship, But false to body and soul they figure forth —

As though the man had cut out shape and shape

From fancies of that other Aretine,¹ To paste below — incorporate the filth With cherub faces on a missal-page! Whereby the man so far attains his end

20 That strange temptation is permitted, — see!

Pompilia wife, and Caponsacchi priest, Are brought together as nor priest nor wife Should stand, and there is passion in the place,

Power in the air for evil as for good, Promptings from heaven and hell, as if the stars

Fought in their courses for a fate to be. Thus stand the wife and priest, a spectacle, I doubt not, to unseen assemblage there. No lamp will mark that window for a shrine,

30 No tablet signalise the terrace, teach New generations which succeed the old The pavement of the street is holy ground; No bard describe in verse how Christ prevailed

And Satan fell like lightning! Why re-pine?

What does the world, told truth, but lie the more?

A second time the plot is foiled; nor, now, By corresponding sin for countercheck, No wile and trick that baffle trick and wile, —

The play o' the parents! Here the blot is blanch'd

40 By God's gift of a purity of soul That will not take pollution, ermine-like Armed from dishonour by its own soft snow.

Such was this gift of God who showed for once

¹ That other Aretine: Pietro-Aretino, author of various obscene writings.

How He would have the world go white: it seems

As a new attribute were born of each Champion of truth, the priest and wife I praise, —

As a new safeguard sprang up in defence Of their new noble nature: so a thorn Comes to the aid of and completes the rose —

Courage to-wit, no woman's gift nor priest's, I' the crisis; might leaps vindicating right. See how the strong aggressor, bad and bold,

With every vantage, preconcerts surprise, Leaps of a sudden at his victim's throat In a byeway, — how fares he when face to face

With Caponsacchi? Who fights, who fears now?

There quails Count Guido armed to the chattering teeth,

Cowers at the steadfast eye and quiet word O' the Canon of the Pieve! There skulks crime

Behind law called in to back cowardice: 6 While out of the poor trampled worm the wife,

Springs up a serpent!

But anon of these.

Him I judge now, — of him proceed to note,

Failing the first, a second chance befriends Guido, gives pause ere punishment arrive. The law he called, comes, hears, adjudicates,

Nor does amiss i' the main, — secludes the wife

From the husband, respites the oppressed one, grants

Probation to the oppressor, could he know The mercy of a minute's fiery purge!

The furnace-coals alike of public scorn, Private remorse, heaped glowing on his head,

What if, — the force and guile, the ore's alloy,

Eliminate, his baser soul refined —

The lost be saved even yet, so as by fire?

Let him, rebuked, go softly all his days And, when no graver musings claim their due,

Meditate on a man's immense mistake Who, fashioned to use feet and walk deigns crawl —

Takes the unmanly means — ay, though to ends

Man scarce should make for, would but reach thro' wrong, —

May sin, but nowise needs shame manhood so:

Since fowlers hawk, shoot, nay and snare the game.

And yet eschew vile practice, nor find sport

In torch-light treachery or the luring owl.

But how hunts Guido? Why, the fraudulent trap —

Late spurned to ruin by the indignant feet
Of fellows in the chase who loved fair play —

Here he picks up its fragments to the least,
Lades him and hies to the old lurking-place

Where haply he may patch again, refit
The mischief, file its blunted teeth anew,
Make sure, next time, first snap shall break the bone.

Craft, greed and violence complot revenge:
Craft, for its quota, schemes to bring about
And seize occasion and be safe withal:
Greed craves its act may work both far and near,

Crush the tree, branch and trunk and root,
beside.

Whichever twig or leaf arrests a streak
Of possible sunshine else would coin itself,
And drop down one more gold piece in the path:

Violence stipulates "Advantage proved
"And safety sure, be pain the overplus!
"Murder with jagged knife! Cut but tear too!

"Foiled oft, starved long, glut malice for amends!"

And what, craft's scheme? scheme sorrowful and strange

As though the elements, whom mercy checked,

Had mustered hate for one eruption more,
One final deluge to surprise the Ark
Cradled and sleeping on its mountain-top:
Their outbreak-signal — what but the dove's coo,

Back with the olive in her bill for news
Sorrow was over? 'Tis an infant's birth,
Guido's first born, his son and heir, that gives

The occasion: other men cut free their souls

From care in such a case, fly up in thanks
To God, reach, recognise His love for once:

Guido cries "Soul, at last the mire is thine!

"Lie there in likeness of a money-bag

"My babe's birth so pins down past moving now,

"That I dare cut adrift the lives I late

"Scrupled to touch lest thou escape with them!

"These parents and their child my wife, — touch one,

"Lose all! Their rights determined on a head

"I could but hate, not harm, since from each hair

"Dangled a hope for me: now — chance and change!

"No right was in their child but passes plain

"To that child's child and through such child to me.

"I am a father now, — come what, come will,

"I represent my child; he comes between —

"Cuts sudden off the sunshine of this life

"From those three: why, the gold is in his curls!

"Not with old Pietro's, Violante's head, 50

"Not his grey horror, her more hideous black —

"Go these, devoted to the knife!"

'Tis done:

Wherefore should mind misgive, heart hesitate?

He calls to counsel, fashions certain four
Colourless natures counted clean till now,
— Rustic simplicity, uncorrupted youth,
Ignorant virtue! Here's the gold o' the prime

When Saturn ruled, shall shock our leaden day —

The clown abash the courtier! Mark it, bards!

The courtier tries his hand on clownship 60 here,

Speaks a word, names a crime, appoints a price, —

Just breathes on what, suffused with all himself,

Is red-hot henceforth past distinction now
I' the common glow of hell. And thus they break

And blaze on us at Rome, Christ's birth-night-eve!

Oh angels that sang erst "On the earth, peace!

"To man, good will!" — such peace finds earth to-day!

After the seventeen hundred years, so man
Wills good to man, so Guido makes complete

His murder! what is it I said? — cuts 70 loose

Three lives that hitherto he suffered cling,
Simply because each served to nail secure,

By a corner of the money-bag, his soul, —
Therefore, lives sacred till the babe's first breath

O'erweights them in the balance, — off they fly!

So is the murder managed, sin conceived
To the full: and why not crowned with triumph too?

Why must the sin, conceived thus, bring forth death?

I note how, within hair's-breadth of escape,
Impunity and the thing supposed success, 80

Guido is found when the check comes, the change,

The monitory touch o' the tether — felt

By few, not marked by many, named by none

At the moment, only recognised aright
In the fulness of the days, for God's, lest sin
Enured the service, leap the line: such
check —

A secret which this life finds hard to keep,
And, often guessed, is never quite revealed —
Needs must trip Guido on a stumbling-
block.

- 10 Too vulgar, too absurdly plain if the path!
Study this single oversight of care,
This hebetude that marred sagacity,
Forgetfulness of all the man best knew, —
How ah! stranger having need to fly,
Needs but to ask and have the means of
flight.

Why, the first archia tells you, to leave
Rome,

Get horses, you must show the warrant,
just

The banal scrap, clerk's scribble, a fair
word buys,

Or foul one, if a ducat sweeten word, —

- 20 And straight authority will back demand.
Give you the pick o' the post-house! —
how should he,

Then, resident at Rome for thirty years,
Guido, instruct a stranger! And himself
Forgets just this poor paper scrap, where-
with

Armed, every door he knocks at opens wide
To save him: horsed and manned, with
such advance

O' the hunt behind, why, 'twere the easy
task

Of hours told on the fingers of one hand,
To reach the Tuscan frontier, laugh at
home.

- 30 Light-hearted with his fellows of the place, —
Prepared by that strange shameful judg-
ment, that

Satire upon a sentence just pronounced
By the Rota and confirmed by the Gran-
duke, —

Ready in a circle to receive their peer,
Appreciate his good story how, when
Rome,

The Pope-King and the populace of priests
Made common cause with their confederate
The other priestling who secured his wife,
He, all unaided, wiped out the affront
With decent bloodshed and could face his
friends,

Frolic it in the world's eye. Ay, such tale
Missed such applause, and by such over-
sight!

So, tired and footsore, those blood-flustered
five

Went reeling on the road through dark and
told,

The few permissible miles, to sink at
length.

Wallow and sleep in the first wayside
screw,

As the other herd quenched, if the wash
of the wave.

— Each swine, the devil inside him: so
slept they,

And ~~several~~ caught and caged — all through
one trip,

One touch of fool in Guido the astute! 50

He curses the omission, I surmise,

More than the murder. Why, thou fool
and blind,

It is the mercy-stroke that stops thy fate,
Hamstrings and holds thee to thy hurt, —
but how?

On the edge o' the precipice! One minute
more.

Thou hadst gone farther and fared worse,
my son,

Fathoms down on the flint and fire be-
neath!

Thy comrades each and all were of one
mind,

Thy murder done, to straightway murder
thee

In turn, because of promised pay withheld. 60

So, to the last, greed found itself at odds

With craft in thee, and, proving conqueror.

Had sent thee, the same night that crowned
thy hope,

Thither where, this same day, I see thee
not,

Nor, through God's mercy, need, to-mor-
row, see.

Such I find Guido, midstmost blotch of black
Discord in this group of clustered
crimes

Huddling together in the cave they call

Their pact outraged day thus penetrates.

Around him ranged, now close and now 70
remote,

Prominent or obscure to meet the needs

O' the magi and master, I detect each
shape:

Solitary if he were not leashed the less,

All alike couched, all despoiled arise

By one and the same pitchy furnace stirred

At the centre: see, they lick the master's
hand, —

This fox-faced horrible priest, this brother-
brute

The Abate, why, mere wolfishness
looks well.

Guido stands honest in the red o' the flame,
Beside this yellow that would pass for
white.

Twice Guido, all craft but no violence,

This copier of the mien and gait and
gait.

Of Peter and Paul, that he may go dis-
guised,

- Rob halt and lame, sick folk i' the temple-porch!
- Armed with religion, fortified by law,
A man of peace, who trims the midnight lamp
And turns the classic page — and all for craft,
All to work harm with, yet incur no scratch!
While Guido brings the struggle to a close,
Paul steps back the due distance, clear o' the trap
He builds and baits. Guido I catch and judge;
Paul is past reach in this world and my time:
- 10 That is a case reserved. Pass to the next,
The boy of the brood, the young Girolamo Priest, Canon, and what more? nor wolf nor fox,
But hybrid, neither craft nor violence
Wholly, part violence part craft: such cross
Tempt's speculation — will both blend one day,
And prove hell's better product? Or subside
And let the simple quality emerge,
Go on with Satan's service the old way?
Meanwhile, what promise, — what performance too!
- 20 For there's a new distinctive touch, I see,
Lust — lacking in the two — hell's own blue tint
That gives a character and marks the man
More than a match for yellow and red.
Once more,
A case reserved: why should I doubt?
Then comes
The gaunt grey nightmare in the furthest smoke,
The hag that gave these three abortions birth,
Unmotherly mother and unwomanly
Woman, that near turns motherhood to shame,
Womanliness to loathing: no one word,
30 No gesture to curb cruelty a whit
More than the she-pard thwarts her play-some whelps
Trying their milk-teeth on the soft o' the throat
O' the first fawn, flung, with those beseeching eyes,
Flat in the covert! How should she but couch,
Lick the dry lips, unsheath the blunted claw,
Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at what chance
Old bloody half-forgotten dream may flit,
Born when herself was novice to the taste,
The while she lets youth take its pleasure.
Last,
- These God-abandoned wretched lumps of 40
life,
These four companions, — country-folk this time,
Not tainted by the unwholesome civic breath,
Much less the curse o' the Court! Mere striplings too,
Fit to do human nature justice still!
Surely when impudence in Guido's shape
Shall propose crime and proffer money's-worth
To these stout tall rough bright-eyed black-haired boys,
The blood shall bound in answer to each check
Before the indignant outcry break from lip!
Are these i' the mood to murder, hardly 50
loosed
From healthy autumn-finish of ploughed glebe,
Grapes in the barrel, work at happy end,
And winter near with rest and Christmas play?
How greet they Guido with his final task —
(As if he put proposed "One vineyard more
"To dig, ere frost come, then relax indeed!")
"Anywhere, anyhow and anyway,
"Murder me some three people, old and young,
"Ye never heard the names of, — and be paid
"So much!" And the whole four accede 60
at once.
Demur? Do cattle bidden march or halt?
Is it some lingering habit, old fond faith
I' the lord o' the land, instructs them, —
birthright badge
Of feudal tenure claims its slaves again?
Not so at all, thou noble human heart!
All is done purely for the pay, — which, earned,
And not forthcoming at the instant, makes
Religion heresy, and the lord o' the land
Fit subject for a murder in his turn.
The patron with cut throat and rifled purse 70
Deposited i' the roadside-ditch, his due,
Nought hinders each good fellow trudging home,
The heavier by a piece or two in poke,
And so with new zest to the common life,
Mattock and spade, plough-tail and waggon-shaft,
Till some such other piece of luck betide,
Who knows? Since this is a mere start in life,
And none of them exceeds the twentieth year.
Nay, more i' the background yet? Un-noticed forms
Claim to be classed, subordinately vile? 80

- Complacent lookers-on that laugh, — per-
chance
Shake head as their friend's horse-play
grows too rough
With the mere child he manages amiss —
But would not interfere and make bad
worse
For twice the fractious tears and prayers:
thou know'st
Civility better, Marzi-Medici,
Governor for thy kinsman the Granduke!
Fit representative of law, man's lamp
I' the magistrate's grasp full-flare, no rush-
light-end
10 Sputtering 'twixt thumb and finger of the
priest!
Whose answer to the couple's cry for help
Is a threat, — whose remedy of Pompilia's
wrong,
A shrug o' the shoulder, and facetious
word
Or wink, traditional with Tuscan wits,
To Guido in the doorway. Laud to law!
The wife is pushed back to the husband, he
Who knows how these home-squabbings
persecute
People who have the public good to mind,
And work best with a silence in the court!
- 20 Ah, but I save my word at least for thee,
Archbishop, who art under me i' the
Church,
As I am under God, — thou, chosen by
both
To do the shepherd's office, feed the sheep —
How of this lamb that panted at thy foot
While the wolf pressed on her within
crook's reach?
Wast thou the hireling that did turn and
flee?
With thee at least anon the little word!
- Such denizens o' the cave now cluster
round
And heat the furnace sevenfold: time in-
deed
30 A bolt from heaven should cleave roof and
clear place,
Transfix and show the world, suspiring
flame,
The main offender, scar and brand the rest
Hurrying, each miscreant to his hole:
then flood
And purify the scene with outside day —
Which yet, in the absolutest drench of
dark,
Ne'er wants a witness, some stray beauty-
beam
To the despair of hell.
- First of the first,
Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as now
Perfect in whiteness: stoop thou down,
my child,
- Give one good moment to the poor old 41
Pope
Heart-sick at having all his world to
blame —
Let me look at thee in the flesh as erst,
Let me enjoy the old clean linen garb,
Not the new splendid vesture! Armed
and crowned,
Would Michael, yonder, be, nor crowned
nor armed,
The less pre-eminent angel? Everywhere
I see in the world the intellect of man,
That sword, the energy his subtle spear,
The knowledge which defends him like a
shield —
Everywhere; but they make not up, I 54
think,
The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's
flower
She holds up to the softened gaze of God!
It was not given Pompilia to know much,
Speak much, to write a book, to move
mankind,
Be memorised by who records my time.
Yet if in purity and patience, if
In faith held fast despite the plucking fiend,
Safe like the signet stone with the new
name
That saints are known by, — if in right
returned
For wrong, most pardon for worst injury, 60
If there be any virtue, any praise, —
Then will this woman-child have proved
— who knows? —
Just the one price vouchsafed unworthy
me,
Seven years a gardener of the untoward
ground,
I till, — this earth, my sweat and blood
manure
All the long day that barrenly grows dusk:
At least one blossom makes me proud at
eve
Born 'mid the briers of my enclosure!
Still
(Oh, here as elsewhere, nothingness of
man!)
- Those be the plants; imbedded yonder 70
South
To mellow in the morning, those made fat
By the master's eye, that yield such timid
leaf,
Uncertain bud, as product of his pains!
While — see how this mere chance-sown
cleft-nursed seed
That sprang up by the wayside 'neath the
foot
Of the enemy, this breaks all into blaze,
Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
To incorporate the whole great sun it
loves
From the inch-height whence it looks and
longs! My flower,
My rose, I gather for the breast of God, 80

- This I praise most in thee, where all I
praise,
That having been obedient to the end
According to the light allotted, law
Prescribed thy life, still tried, still stand-
ing test, —
Dutiful to the foolish parents first,
Submissive next to the bad husband, —
nay,
Tolerant of those meaner miserable
That did his hests, eked out the dole of
pain, —
Thou, patient thus, couldst rise from law
to law,
10 The old to the new, promoted at one cry
O' the trump of God to the new service, not
To longer bear, but henceforth fight, be
found
Sublime in new impatience with the foe!
Endure man and obey God: plant firm
foot
On neck of man, tread man into the hell
Meet for him, and obey God all the more!
Oh child that didst despise thy life so
much
When it seemed only thine to keep or lose,
How the fine ear felt fall the first low word
20 "Value life, and preserve life for My
sake!"
Thou didst . . . how shall I say? . . .
receive so long
The standing ordinance of God on earth,
What wonder if the novel claim had clashed
With old requirement, seemed to supersede
Too much the customary law? But,
brave,
Thou at first prompting of what I call God,
And fools call Nature, didst hear, compre-
hend,
Accept the obligation laid on thee,
Mother elect, to save the unborn child,
30 As brute and bird do, reptile and the fly,
Ay and, I nothing doubt, even tree, shrub,
plant
And flower o' the field, all in a common
pact
To worthily defend the trust of trusts,
Life from the Ever Living: — didst re-
sist —
Anticipate the office that is mine —
And with his own sword stay the upraised
arm,
The endeavour of the wicked, and defend
Him who, — again in my default, — was
there
For visible providence: one less true than
thou
40 To touch, i' the past, less practised in the
right,
Approved less far in all docility
To all instruction, — how had such an
one
Made scruple "Is this motion a decree?"
It was authentic to the experienced ear
- O' the good and faithful servant. Go
past me
And get thy praise, — and be not far to
seek
Presently when I follow if I may!
And surely not so very much apart
Need I place thee, my warrior-priest, —
in whom
What if I gain the other rose, the gold, 50
We grave to imitate God's miracle,
Greet monarchs with, good rose in its
degree?
Irregular noble scapegrace — son the
same!
Faulty — and peradventure ours the fault
Who still misteach, mislead, throw hook
and line,
Thinking to land leviathan forsooth,
Tame the scaled neck, play with him as a
bird,
And bind him for our maidens! Better
bear
The King of Pride go wantoning awhile,
Unplugged by cord in nose and thorn in 60
jaw,
Through deep to deep, followed by all that
shine,
Churning the blackness hoary: He who
made
The comely terror, He shall make the
sword
To match that piece of netherstone his
heart,
Ay, nor miss praise thereby; who else shut
fire
I' the stone, to leap from mouth at sword's
first stroke,
In lamps of love and faith, the chivalry
That dares the right and disregards alike
The yea and nay o' the world? Self-
sacrifice, —
What if an idol took it? Ask the Church 70
Why she was wont to turn each Venus
here, —
Poor Rome perversely lingered round, de-
spite
Instruction, for the sake of purblind love, —
Into Madonna's shape, and waste no whit
Of aught so rare on earth as gratitude!
All this sweet savour was not ours but thine,
Nard of the rock, a natural wealth we
name
Incense, and treasure up as food for saints,
When flung to us — whose function was to
give
Not find the costly perfume. Do I smile? 80
Nay, Caponsacchi, much I find amiss,
Blameworthy, punishable in this freak
Of thine, this youth prolonged, though age
was ripe,
This masquerade in sober day, with
change
Of motley too, — now hypocrite's disguise

- Now fool's-costume: which lie was least
like truth,
Which the ungainlier, more discordant garb
With that symmetric soul inside my son,
The churchman's or the worldling's, —
let him judge,
Our adversary who enjoys the task!
I rather chronicle the healthy rage, —
When the first moan broke from the
martyr-maid
At that uncaging of the beasts, — made
bare
My athlete on the instant, gave such
good
- 10 Great undisguised leap over post and pale
Right into the mid-cirque, free fighting-
place.
There may have been rash stripping —
every rag
Went to the winds, — infringement mani-
fold
Of laws prescribed pudicity, I fear,
In this impulsive and prompt self-display!
Ever such tax comes of the foolish youth;
Men mulct the wiser manhood, and suspect
No veritable star swims out of cloud.
Bear thou such imputation, undergo
- 20 The penalty I nowise dare relax, —
Conventional chastisement and rebuke.
But for the outcome, the brave starry birth
Conciliating earth with all that cloud,
Thank heaven as I do! Ay, such cham-
pionship
Of God at first blush, such prompt cheery
thud
Of glove on ground that answers ringingly
The challenge of the false knight, — watch
we long
And wait we vainly for its gallant like
From those appointed to the service, sworn
- 30 His body-guard with pay and privilege —
White-cinct, because in white walks sanc-
tity,
Red-socked, how else proclaim fine scorn
of flesh,
Unchariness of blood when blood faith
begs!
Where are the men-at-arms with cross on
coat?
Aloof, bewraying their attire: whilst thou
In mask and motley, pledged to dance
not fight,
Sprang'st forth the hero! In thought,
word and deed,
How throughout all thy warfare thou wast
pure,
I find it easy to believe: and if
- 40 At any fateful moment of the strange
Adventure, the strong passion of that
strait,
Fear and surprise, may have revealed too
much, —
As when a thundrous midnight, with black
air
- That burns, rain-drops that blister, breaks
a spell,
Draws out the excessive virtue of some
sheathed
Shut unsuspected flower that hoards and
hides
Immensity of sweetness, — so, perchance,
Might the surprise and fear release too
much
The perfect beauty of the body and soul
Thou savdest in thy passion for God's sake, 54
He who is Pity. Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second
time!
Why comes temptation but for man to
meet
And master and make crouch beneath his
foot,
And so be pedestalled in triumph? Pray
"Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"
Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the
bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and
hair,
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
That so he may do battle and have praise! 60
Do I not see the praise? — that while thy
mates
Bound to deserve it the matter, prove at
need
Unprofitable through the very pains
We gave to train them well and start them
fair, —
Are found too stiff, with standing ranked
and ranged,
For onset in good earnest, too obtuse
Of ear, through iteration of command,
For catching quick the sense of the real
cry, —
Thou, whose sword-hand was used to
strike the lute,
Whose sentry-station graced some wanton's 70
gate,
Thou didst push forward and show mettle,
shame
The laggards, and retrieve the day. Well
done!
Be glad thou hast let light into the world
Through that irregular breach o' the boun-
dary, — see
The same upon thy path and march as-
sured,
Learning anew the use of soldiership,
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end! Ruminant,
Deserve the initiatory spasm, — once
more
Work, be unhappy but bear life, my son! 80
And troop you, somewhere 'twixt the best
and worst,
Where crowd the indifferent product, all
too poor
Makeshift, starved samples of humanity!

- Father and mother, huddle there and hide!
A gracious eye may find you! Foul and fair,
Sadly mixed natures: self-indulgent, — yet
Self-sacrificing too: how the love soars,
How the craft, avarice, vanity and spite
Sink again! So they keep the middle course,
Slide into silly crime at unaware,
Slip back upon the stupid virtue, stay
Nowhere enough for being classed, I hope
o And fear. Accept the swift and rueful death,
Taught, somewhat sternlier than is wont, what waits
The ambiguous creature, — how the one black tuft
Steadies the aim of the arrow just as well
As the wide faultless white on the bird's breast!
Nay, you were punished in the very part
That looked most pure of speck, — 'twas honest love
Betrayed you, — did love seem most worthy pains,
Challenge such purging, since ordained survive
When all the rest of you was done with? Go!
13 Never again elude the choice of tints!
White shall not neutralise the black, nor good
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:
Life's business being just the terrible choice.
- So do I see, pronounce on all and some
Grouped for my judgment now, — profess no doubt
While I pronounce: dark, difficult enough
The human sphere, yet eyes grow sharp by use,
I find the truth, dispart the shine from shade,
As a mere man may, with no special touch
30 O' the lynx-gift in each ordinary orb:
Nay, if the popular notion class me right,
One of well-nigh decayed intelligence, —
What of that? Through hard labour and good will,
And habitude that gives a blind man sight
At the practised finger-ends of him, I do
Discern, and dare decree in consequence,
Whatever prove the peril of mistake.
Whence, then, this quite new quick cold thrill, — cloud-like,
This keen dread creeping from a quarter scarce
40 Suspected in the skies I nightly scan?
What slacks the tense nerve, saps the wound-up spring
Of the act that should and shall be, sends the mount
- And mass o' the whole man's-strength, — conglobed so late —
Shudderingly into dust, a moment's work?
While I stand firm, go fearless, in this world,
For this life recognise and arbitrate,
Touch and let stay, or else remove a thing,
Judge "This is right, this object out of place,"
Candle in hand that helps me and to spare, —
What if a voice deride me, "Perk and pry!
"Brighten each nook with thine intelligence!
"Play the good householder, ply man and maid
"With tasks prolonged into the midnight, test
"Their work and nowise stint of the due wage
"Each worthy worker: but with gyves and whip
"Pay thou misprision of a single point.
"Plain to thy happy self who lift'st the light.
"Lament'st the darkling, — bold to all beneath!
"What if thyself adventure, now the place
"Is purged so well? Leave pavement 60 and mount roof,
"Look round thee for the light of the upper sky,
"The fire which lit thy fire which finds default
"In Guido Franceschini to his cost!
"What if, above in the domain of light,
"Thou miss the accustomed signs, remark eclipse?
"Shalt thou still gaze on ground nor lift a lid, —
"Steady in thy superb prerogative,
"Thy inch of inkling, — nor once face the doubt
"T' the sphere above thee, darkness to be felt?"
- Yet my poor spark had for its source, the 70 sun;
Thither I sent the great looks which compel
Light from its fount: all that I do and am
Comes from the truth, or seen or else surmised,
Remembered or divined, as mere man may:
I know just so, nor otherwise. As I know,
I speak, — what should I know, then, and how speak
Were there a wild mistake of eye or brain
As to recorded governance above?
If my own breath, only, blew coal alight
I styled celestial and the morning-star? 80

I, who in this world act resolutely,
 Dispose of men, their bodies and their
 souls,
 As they acknowledge or gainsay the light
 I show them, — shall I too lack courage?
 — leave
 I, too, the post of me, like those I blame?
 Refuse, with kindred inconsistency,
 To grapple danger whereby souls grow
 strong?
 I am near the end; but still not at the end;
 All to the very end is trial in life:
 At this stage is the trial of my soul
 Danger to face, or danger to refuse?
 Shall I dare try the doubt now, or not
 dare?
 O Thou, — as represented here to me
 In such conception as my soul allows, —
 Under Thy measureless, my atom width! —
 Man's mind, what is it but a convex glass
 Wherein are gathered all the scattered
 points
 Picked out of the immensity of sky,
 To re-unite there, be our heaven for earth,
 Our known unknown, our God revealed to
 man?
 Existent somewhere, somehow, as a
 whole;
 Here, as a whole proportioned to our
 sense, —
 There, (which is nowhere, speech must
 babble thus!)
 In the absolute immensity, the whole
 Appreciable solely by Thyself, —
 Here, by the little mind of man, reduced
 To littleness that suits his faculty,
 In the degree appreciable too;
 Between Thee and ourselves — nay even,
 again,
 Below us, to the extreme of the minute,
 Appreciable by how many and what diverse
 Modes of the life Thou madest be! (why
 live
 Except for love, — how love unless they
 know?)
 Each of them, only filling to the edge,
 Insect or angel, his just length and breadth,
 Due facet of reflection, — full, no less,
 Angel or insect, as Thou framedst things.
 I it is who have been appointed here
 To represent Thee, in my turn, on earth,
 Just as, if new philosophy know aught,
 This one earth, out of all the multitude
 Of peopled worlds, as stars are now sup-
 posed, —
 Was chosen, and no sun-star of the swarm,
 For stage and scene of Thy transcendent
 act
 Beside which even the creation fades
 Into a puny exercise of power.
 Choice of the world, choice of the thing I
 am,
 Both emanate alike from Thy dread play

Of operation outside this our sphere
 Where things are classed and counted 51
 small or great, —
 Incomprehensibly the choice is Thine!
 I therefore bow my head and take Thy
 place
 There is, beside the works, a tale of Thee
 In the world's mouth, which I find cred-
 ible:
 I love it with my heart: unsatisfied,
 I try it with my reason, nor discept
 From any point I probe and pronounce
 sound.
 Mind is not matter nor from matter, but
 Above, — leave matter then, proceed with
 mind!
 Man's be the mind recognised at the 64
 height, —
 Leave the inferior minds and look at man!
 Is he the strong, intelligent and good
 Up to his own conceivable height?
 Nowise.
 Enough o' the low, — soar the conceiv-
 able height,
 Find cause to match the effect in evidence,
 The work i' the world, not man's but
 God's; leave man!
 Conjecture of the worker by the work:
 Is there strength there? — enough: in-
 telligence?
 Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
 Not to the human eye in the present state, 70
 An isoscele deficient in the base.¹
 What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
 But just the instance which this tale sup-
 plies
 Of love without a limit? So is strength,
 So is intelligence; let love be so,
 Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
 Then is the tale true and God shows com-
 plete.
 Beyond the tale, I reach into the dark,
 Feel what I cannot see, and still faith
 stands:
 I can believe this dread machinery 80
 Of sin and sorrow, would confound me
 else,
 Devised, — all pain, at most expenditure
 Of pain by Who devised pain, — to evolve,
 By new machinery in counterpart,
 The moral qualities of man — how else? —
 To make him love in turn and be beloved,
 Creative and self-sacrificing too,
 And thus eventually God-like, (ay,
 "I have said ye are Gods," — shall it be
 said for nought?)
 Enable man to wring, from out all pain, 90
 All pleasure for a common heritage
 To all eternity: this may be surmised,
 The other is revealed, — whether a fact,
¹ An isoscele deficient in the base: two sides
 of the triangle, strength and intelligence, are
 visible; the third, goodness, is not so in the
 present state of our knowledge.

- Absolute, abstract, independent truth,
 Historic, not reduced to suit man's
 mind, —
 Or only truth reverberate, changed, made
 pass
 A spectrum into mind, the narrow eye, —
 The same and not the same, else uncon-
 ceived —
 Though quite conceivable to the next
 grade
 Above it in intelligence, — as truth
 Easy to man were blindness to the beast
 By parity of procedure, — the same truth
 In a new form, but changed in either case:
 What matter so intelligence be filled?
 To a child, the sea is angry, for it roars:
 Frost bites, else why the tooth-like fret on
 face?
 Man makes acoustics deal with the sea's
 wrath,
 Explains the choppy cheek by chymic
 law, —
 To man and child remains the same effect
 On drum of ear and root of nose, change
 cause
 Never so thoroughly: so my heart be
 struck,
 What care I, — by God's gloved hand or
 the bare?
 Nor do I much perplex me with aught
 hard,
 Dubious in the transmitting of the tale, —
 No, nor with certain riddles set to solve.
 This life is training and a passage; pass, —
 Still, we march over some flat obstacle
 We made give way before us; solid truth
 In front of it, what motion for the world?
 The moral sense grows but by exercise.
 'Tis even as man grew probatively
 Initiated in Godship, set to make
 A fairer moral world than this he finds,
 Guess now what shall be known hereafter.
 Deal
 Thus with the present problem: as we see,
 A faultless creature is destroyed, and sin
 Has had its way i' the world where God
 should rule.
 Ay, but for this irrelevant circumstance
 Of inquisition after blood, we see
 Pompilia lost and Guido saved: how long?
 For his whole life: how much is that
 whole life?
 We are not babes, but know the minute's
 worth,
 And feel that life is large and the world
 small,
 So, wait till life have passed from out the
 world.
 Neither does this astonish at the end,
 That whereas, I can so receive and trust,
 Other men, made with hearts and souls the
 same,
 Reject and disbelieve, — subordinate
 The future to the present, — sin, nor fear.
- This I refer still to the foremost fact,
 Life is probation and the earth no goal
 But starting-point of man: compel him
 strive,
 Which means, in man, as good as reach 50
 the goal, —
 Why institute that race, his life, at all?
 But this does overwhelm me with surprise,
 Touch me to terror, — not that faith, the
 pearl,
 Should be let lie by fishers wanting food, —
 Nor, seen and handled by a certain few
 Critical and contemptuous, straight con-
 signed
 To shore and shingle for the pebble it
 proves, —
 But that, when haply found and known and
 named
 By the residue made rich for evermore,
 These, — that these favoured ones, should 60
 in a trice
 Turn, and with double zest go dredge for
 whelks,
 Mud-worms that make the savoury soup!
 Enough
 O' the disbelievers, see the faithful few!
 How do the Christians here deport them,
 keep
 Their robes of white unspotted by the
 world?
 What is this Aretine Archbishop, this
 Man under me as I am under God,
 This champion of the faith, I armed and
 decked,
 Pushed forward, put upon a pinnacle,
 To show the enemy his victor, — see! 70
 What's the best fighting when the couple
 close?
 Pompilia cries, "Protect me from the
 wolf!"
 He — "No, thy Guido is rough, heady,
 strong,
 "Dangerous to disquiet: let him bide!
 "He needs some bone to mumble, help
 amuse
 "The darkness of his den with: so, the
 fawn
 "Which limps up bleeding to my foot and
 lies,
 "— Come to me, daughter! — thus I
 throw him back!"
 Have we misjudged here, over-armed our
 knight,
 Given gold and silk where plain hard steel 80
 serves best,
 Enfeebled whom we sought to fortify,
 Made an archbishop and undone a saint?
 Well, then, descend these heights, this
 pride of life,
 Sit in the ashes with a barefoot monk
 Who long ago stamped out the worldly
 sparks,
 By fasting, watching, stone cell and wire
 scourge,

— No such indulgence as unknots the strength —

These breed the tight nerve and tough cuticle,

And the world's praise or blame runs rillet-wise

Off the broad back and brawny breast, we know!

He meets the first cold sprinkle of the world,

And shudders to the marrow. "Save this child?

"Oh, my superiors, oh, the Archbishop's self!

"Who was it dared lay hand upon the ark

"His betters saw fall nor put finger forth?

10 "Great ones could help yet help not: why should small?

"I break my promise: let her break her heart!"

These are the Christians not the worldlings, not

The sceptics, who thus battle for the faith!

If foolish virgins disobey and sleep,

What wonder? But, this time, the wise that watch,

Sell lamps and buy lutes, exchange oil for wine,

The mystic Spouse betrays the Bridegroom here.

To our last resource, then! Since all flesh is weak,

Bind weaknesses together, we get strength:

20 The individual weighed, found wanting, try

Some institution, honest artifice

Where by the units grow compact and firm!

Each props the other, and so stand is made

By our embodied cowards that grow brave.

The Monastery called of Convertites,

Meant to help women because these helped Christ, —

A thing existent only while it acts,

Does as designed, else a nonentity, —

For what is an idea unrealised? —

30 Pompilia is consigned to these for help.

They do help: they are prompt to testify

To her pure life and saintly dying days.

She dies, and lo, who seemed so poor,

proves rich.

What does the body that lives through helpfulness

To women for Christ's sake? The kiss turns bite,

The dove's note changes to the crow's cry: judge!

"Seeing that this our Convent claims of right

"What goods belong to those we succour,

be

"The same proved women of dishonest life, —

40 "And seeing that this Trial made appear

"Pompilia was in such predicament, —

"The Convent hereupon pretends to said

"Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,
"And takes possession by the Fisc's advice."

Such is their attestation to the cause
Of Christ, who had one saint at least, they hoped:

But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse
To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat?

Christ must give up his gains then! They unsay

All the fine speeches, — who was saint is 59
whore.

Why, scripture yields no parallel for this!
The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's coat;

We want another legend of the Twelve
Disputing if it was Christ's coat at all,

Claiming as prize the woof of price — for why?

The Master was a thief, purloined the same,
Or paid for it out of the common bag!

Can it be this is end and outcome, all
I take with me to show as stewardship's fruit,

The best yield of the latest time, this 60
year

The seventeen-hundredth since God died
for man?

Is such effect proportionate to cause?
And still the terror keeps on the increase

When I perceive . . . how can I blink the fact?

That the fault, the obduracy to good,
Lies not with the impracticable stuff

Whence man is made, his very nature's fault,

As if it were of ice the moon may gild
Not melt, or stone 'twas meant the sun

should warm

Not make bear flowers, — nor ice nor 70
stone to blame:

But it can melt, that ice, can bloom, that stone,

Impossible to rule of day and night!
This terrifies me, thus compelled perceive,

Whatever love and faith we looked should spring

At advent of the authoritative star,
Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the source, —

These have leapt forth profusely in old time,
These still respond with promptitude to-day,

At challenge of — what unacknowledged powers

O' the air, what uncommissioned meteors, 84
warmth

By law, and light by rule should supersede?

For see this priest, this Caponsacchi, stung

At the first summons, — "Help for hor-

our's sake,

"Play the man, pity the oppressed!" — no
 pause,
 How does he lay about him in the midst,
 Strike any foe, right wrong at any risk,
 All blindness, bravery and obedience! —
 blind?

Ay, as a man would be inside the sun,
 Delirious with the plenitude of light
 Should refuse him to the finger-ends —
 Let him rush straight, and how shall he go
 wrong?

Where are the Christians in their panoply?
 10 The loins we girt about with truth, the
 breasts

Righteousness plated round, the shield of
 faith,

The helmet of salvation, and that sword
 O' the Spirit, even the word of God, —
 where these?

Slunk into corners! Oh, I hear at once
 Hubbub of protestation! "What, we
 monks,

"We friars, of such an order, such a
 rule,

"Have not we fought, bled, left our
 martyr-mark

"At every point along the boundary-line
 "'Twixt true and false, religion and the
 world,

20 "Where this or the other dogma of our
 Church

"Called for defence?" And I, despite
 myself,

How can I but speak loud what truth
 speaks low,

"Or better than the best, or nothing
 serves!

"What boots deed, I can cap and cover
 straight

"With such another doughtiness to match,
 "Done at an instinct of the natural man?"

Immolate body, sacrifice soul too, —
 Do not these publicans the same? Out-
 strip!

Or else stop race you boast runs neck and
 neck,

30 You with the wings, they with the feet, —
 for shame!

Oh, I remark your diligence and zeal!
 Five years long, now, rounds faith into my
 ears,

"Help thou, or Christendom is done to
 death!"

Five years since, in the Province of To-
 kien,

Which is in China as some people know,
 Maigrot, my Vicar Apostolic there,

Having a great qualm, issues a decree.
 Alack, the converts use as God's name, not

Tien-chu but plain *Tien* or else mere
Shang-ti,

40 As Jesuits please to fancy politic,
 While, say Dominicans, it calls down
 fire, —

For *Tien* means heaven, and *Shang-ti*,
 supreme prince,

While *Tien-chu* means the lord of heaven:
 all cry,

"There is no business urgent for dispatch
 "As that thou send a legate, specially

"Cardinal Tournon, straight to Peking,
 there

"To settle and compose the difference!"
 So have I seen a potentate all fume

For some infringement of his realm's just
 right,

Some menace to a mud-built straw- 50
 thatched farm

O' the frontier; while inside the mainland
 lie,

Quite undisputed-for in solitude,
 Whole cities plague may waste or famine

sap:
 What if the sun crumble, the sands en-
 croach,

While he looks on sublimely at his ease?
 How does their ruin touch the empire's

bound?

And in this little all that was to be?
 Where is the gloriously-decisive change,

Metamorphosis the immeasurable
 Of human clay to divine gold, we looked 60

Should, in some poor sort, justify its price?
 Had an adept of the mere Rosy Cross?

Spent his life to consummate the Great
 Work,

Would not we start to see the stuff it
 touched

Yield not a grain more than the vulgar got
 By the old smelting-process years ago?

If this were sad to see in just the sage
 Who should profess so much, perform no

more,
 What is it when suspected in that Power
 Who undertook to make and made the 70

world,
 Devised and did effect man, body and soul,
 Ordained salvation for them both, and

yet . . .

Well, is the thing we see, salvation?
 I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,
 Within whose circle of experience burns

The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Good-
 ness, — God:

I must outlive a thing ere know it dead:
 When I outlive the faith there is a sun,

When I lie, ashes to the very soul, —
 Some one, not I, must wail above the 80

heap,
 "He died in dark whence never morn
 arose."

While I see day succeed the deepest
 night —

* An adept of the Rosy Cross a member of
 the society of Rosicrucians.

How can I speak but as I know? — my speech

Must be, throughout the darkness, "It will end:

"The light that did burn, will burn!"
Clouds obscure —

But for which obscuration all were bright?
Too hastily concluded! Sun-suffused,
A cloud may soothe the eye made blind by blaze, —

Better the very clarity of heaven:
The soft streaks are the beautiful and dear.
What but the weakness in a faith supplies
The incentive to humanity, no strength
Absolute, irresistible, comports?
How can man love but what he yearns to help?

And that which men think weakness within strength,
But angels know for strength and stronger yet —

What were it else but the first things made new,

But repetition of the miracle,
The divine instance of self-sacrifice
That never ends and aye begins for man?
So, never I miss footing in the maze,
No, — I have light nor fear the dark at all.

But are mankind not real, who pace outside

My petty circle, world that's measured me?
And when they stumble even as I stand,
Have I a right to stop ear when they cry,
As they were phantoms who took clouds for crags,

Tripped and fell, where man's march might safely move?

Beside, the cry is other than a ghost's,
When out of the old time there pleads some bard,

Philosopher, or both,¹ and — whispers not,
But words it boldly. "The inward work and worth

"Of any mind, what other mind may judge

"Save God who only knows the thing He made,

"The veritable service He exacts?
"It is the outward product men appraise.

"Behold, an engine hoists a tower aloft:
"I looked that it should move the mountain too!"

"Or else 'Had just a turret toppled down,
"Success enough!' — may say the Machinist

"Who knows what less or more result might be:

"But we, who see that done we cannot do,
"A feat beyond man's force," we men must say.

"But we, who see that done we cannot do,
"A feat beyond man's force," we men must say.

"Regard me and that shake I gave the world!

"I was born, not so long before Christ's birth

"As Christ's birth haply did precede thy day, —

"But many a watch before the star of dawn:

"Therefore I lived, — it is thy creed affirms,

"Pope Innocent, who art to answer me! —
"Under conditions, nowise to escape,

"Whereby salvation was impossible.
"Each impulse to achieve the good and fair,

"Each aspiration to the pure and true,
"Being without a warrant or an aim,

"Was just as sterile a felicity
"As if the insect, born to spend his life

"Soaring his circles, stopped them to describe

"(Painfully motionless in the mid-air)
"Some word of weighty counsel for man's sake,

"Some 'Know thyself' or 'Take the golden mean!' ²

"— Forwent his happy dance and the glad ray,

"Died half an hour the sooner and was dust.

"I, born to perish like the brutes, or worse,

"Why not live brutishly, obey brutes' law?

"But I, of body as of soul complete,
"A gymnast at the games, philosopher

"I' the schools, who painted, and made music, — all

"Glories that met upon the tragic stage

"When the Third Poet's ³ tread surprised the Two, —

"Whose lot fell in a land where life was great

"And sense went free and beauty lay profuse,

"I, untouched by one adverse circumstance,

"Adopted virtue as my rule of life,
"Waived all reward, loved but for loving's sake,

"And, what my heart taught me, I taught the world,

"And have been teaching now two thousand years.

"Witness my work, — plays that should please, forsooth!

"They might please, they may displease, they shall teach,

"They shall teach,

² Some "Know thyself" or "Take the golden mean": typical apophthegms of the ancient Greek sages.

³ The Third Poet: Euripides. The Two: Aeschylus and Sophocles.

¹ Some bard, philosopher, or both: the following speech is put into the mouth of Euripides.

- "For truth's sake," so I said, and did, and do.
 "Five hundred years ere Paul spoke, Felix heard, —
 "How much of temperance and righteousness,
 "Judgment to come, did I find reason for,
 "Corroborate with my strong style that spared
 "No sin, nor swerved the more from branding brow
 "Because the sinner was called Zeus and God?
 "How nearly did I guess at that Paul knew?
 "How closely come, in what I represent
 10 "As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank?
 "And as that limner not untruly limns
 "Who draws an object round or square, which square
 "Or round seems to the unassisted eye,
 "Though Galileo's tube display the same
 "Oval or oblong, — so, who controverts
 "I rendered rightly what proves wrongly wrought
 "Beside Paul's picture? Mine was true for me.
 "I saw that there are, first and above all,
 20 "The hidden forces, blind necessities,
 "Named Nature, but the thing's self unconceived:
 "Then follow, — how dependent upon these,
 "We know not, how imposed above ourselves,
 "We well know, — what I name the gods, a power
 "Various or one: for great and strong and good
 "Is there, and little, weak and bad there too,
 "Wisdom and folly: say, these make no God, —
 "What is it else that rules outside man's self?
 "A fact then, — always, to the naked eye, —
 "And so, the one revealment possible
 30 "Of what were unimagined else by man.
 "Therefore, what gods do, man may criticise,
 "Applaud, condemn, — how should he fear the truth? —
 "But likewise have in awe because of power,
 "Venerate for the main munificence,
 "And give the doubtful deed its due excuse
 "From the acknowledged creature of a day
 "To the Eternal and Divine. Thus, bold
 "Yet self-mistrusting, should man bear himself,
- "Most assured on what now concerns him most —
 "The law of his own life, the path he prints, —
 "Which law is virtue and not vice, I say, —
 "And least inquisitive where search least skills,
 "I' the nature we best give the clouds to keep.
 "What could I paint beyond a scheme like this
 "Out of the fragmentary truths where light
 "Lay fitful in a tenebrific time?
 "You have the sunrise now, joins truth to truth,
 "Shoots life and substance into death and void;
 "Themselves compose the whole we made before:
 "The forces and necessity grow God, — 50
 "The beings so contrarious that seemed gods,
 "Prove just His operation manifold
 "And multiform, translated, as must be,
 "Into intelligible shape so far
 "As suits our sense and sets us free to feel.
 "What if I let a child think, childhood-long,
 "That lightning, I would have him spare his eye,
 "Is a real arrow shot at naked orb?
 "The man knows more, but shuts his lids the same:
 "Lightning's cause comprehends nor man 60 nor child.
 "Why then, my scheme, your better knowledge broke,
 "Presently re-adjusts itself, the small
 "Proportioned largelier, parts and whole named new:
 "So much, no more two thousand years have done!
 "Pope, dost thou dare pretend to punish me,
 "For not desecrating sunshine at midnight,
 "Me who crept all-fours, found my way so far —
 "While thou rewardest teachers of the truth,
 "Who miss the plain way in the blaze of noon, —
 "Though just a word from that strong 70 style of mine,
 "Grasped honestly in hand as guiding-staff,
 "Had pricked them a sure path across the bog,
 "That mire of cowardice and slush of lies
 "Wherein I find them wallow in wide day!"

How should I answer this Euripides?
Paul — 'tis a legend — answered Seneca,¹
But that was in the day-spring; noon is
now:

We have got too familiar with the light.
Shall I wish back once more that thrill of
dawn?

When the whole truth-touched man
burned up, one fire?

— Assured the trial, fiery, fierce, but fleet,
Would, from his little heap of ashes, lend
Wings to that conflagration of the world

10 Which Christ awaits ere He makes all
things new:

So should the frail become the perfect, rapt
From glory of pain to glory of joy; and

so
Even in the end, — the act renouncing
earth,

Lands, houses, husbands, wives and
children here, —

Begin that other act which finds all, lost,
Regained, in this time even, a hundred-
fold,

And, in the next time, feels the finite love
Blent and embalmed with the eternal life.

So does the sun ghastly seem to sink

20 In those north parts, lean all but out of
life,

Desist a dread mere breathing-stop, then
slow

Re-assert day, begin the endless rise.

Was this too easy for our after-stage?

Was such a lighting-up of faith, in life,

Only allowed initiate, set man's stop?

In the true way by help of the great glow?

A way wherein it is ordained he walk,

Bearing to see the light from heaven still
more

And more encroached on by the light of
earth,

30 Tentatives earth puts forth to rival heaven,
Earthly incitements that mankind serve
God

For man's sole sake, not God's and there-
fore man's.

Till at last, who distinguishes the sun

From a mere Druid fire on a far mount?

More praise to him who with his subtle
prism

Shall decompose both beams and name
the true.

In such sense, who is last proves first in-
deed;

For how could saints and martyrs fail see
truth

Streak the night's blackness? Who is
faithful now?

40 Who untwists heaven's white from the
yellow flare

O' the world's gross torch, without night's
foil that helped

Produce the Christian act so possible
When in the way stood Nero's cross and
stake, —

So hard now when the world smiles "Right
and wise!

"Faith points the politic, the thrifty way,

"Will make who plods it in the end returns

"Beyond mere fool's sport and improvi-
dence.

"We fools dance thro' the cornfield of this
life,

"Pluck ears to left and right and swallow
raw,

" — Nay, tread, at pleasure, a sheaf under- 50
foot,

"To get the better at some poppy-
flower, —

"Well aware we shall have so much less
wheat

"In the eventual harvest: you meantime

"Waste not a spike, — the richer will you
reap!

"What then? There will be always gar-
nered meal

"Sufficient for our comfortable loaf,

"While you enjoy the undiminished
sack!"

Is it not this ignoble confidence,
Cowardly hardihood, that dulls and

damps,
Makes the old heroism impossible? 60

Unless . . . what whispers me of times to
come?

What if it be the mission of that age

My death will usher into life, to shake

This torpor of assurance from our creed,

Re-introduce the doubt discarded, bring

That formidable danger back, we drove

Long ago to the distance and the dark?

No wild beast now prowls round the in-
fant camp:

We have built wall and sleep in city safe:

But if some earthquake try the towers that 70
laugh

To think they once saw lions rule outside,

And man stand out again, pale, resolute,

Prepared to die, — which means, alive at
last?

As we broke up that old faith of the world,
Have we, next age, to break up this the

new —
Faith, in the thing, grown faith in the

report —
Whence need to bravely disbelieve report

Through increased faith i' the thing re-
ports belie?

Must we deny, — do they, these Molinists,
At peril of their body and their soul, — 80

Recognised truths, obedient to some truth
Unrecognised yet, but perceptible? —

Correct the portrait by the living face.

¹ Paul . . . answered Seneca: referring to the
traditional (but legendary) intercourse between
St. Paul and Seneca.

Man's God, by God's God in the mind of man?
 Then, for the few that rise to the new height,
 The many that must sink to the old depth,
 The multitude found fall away! A few,
 E'en ere new law speak clear, may keep the old,
 Preserve the Christian level, call good good
 And evil evil, (even though razed and blank
 The old titles,) helped by custom, habitude,
 And all else they mistake for finer sense
 O' the fact that reason warrants, — as before,
 They hope perhaps, fear not impossibly.
 At least some one Pompilia left the world
 Will say "I know the right place by foot's feel,
 "I took it and tread firm there; wherefore change?"
 But what a multitude will surely fall
 Quite through the crumbling truth, late subjacent,
 Sink to the next discoverable base,
 Rest upon human nature, settle there
 On what is firm, the lust and pride of life!
 A mass of men, whose very souls even now
 Seem to need re-creating, — so they slink
 Worm-like into the mud, light now lays bare, —
 Whose future we dispose of with shut eyes
 And whisper — "They are grafted, barren twigs,
 "Into the living stock of Christ: may bear
 "One day, till when they lie death-like, not dead," —
 Those who with all the aid of Christ succumb,
 How, without Christ, shall they, unaided, sink?
 Whither but to this gulf before my eyes?
 Do not we end, the century and I?
 The impatient antimasque treads close on kibe
 O' the very masque's self it will mock, — on me,
 Last lingering personage, the impatient mime
 Pushes already, — will I block the way?
 Will my slow trail of garments ne'er leave space
 For pantaloons, sock, plume, and castanet?
 Here comes the first experimentalist
 In the new order of things, — he plays a priest;
 Does he take inspiration from the Church,
 Directly make her rule his law of life?
 Not he: his own mere impulse guides the man —
 Happily sometimes, since ourselves allow

He has danced, in gaiety of heart, i' the main
 The right step through the maze we bade him foot.
 But if his heart had prompted him break loose
 And mar the measure? Why, we must submit,
 And thank the chance that brought him safe so far.
 Will he repeat the prodigy? Perhaps.
 Can he teach others how to quit themselves,
 Show why this step was right while that were wrong?
 How should he? "Ask your hearts as I asked mine,
 "And get discreetly through the morrice too;
 "If your hearts misdirect you, — quit the stage,
 "And make amends, — be there amends to make!"
 Such is, for the Augustin that was once,
 This Canon Caponsacchi we see now.
 "But my heart answers to another tune,"
 Puts in the Abate, second in the suite,
 "I have my taste too, and tread no such step!
 "You choose the glorious life, and may, for me!
 "I like the lowest of life's appetites, —
 "So you judge, — but the very truth of joy
 "To my own apprehension which decides,
 "Call me knave and you get yourself called fool!
 "I live for greed, ambition, lust, revenge;
 "Attain these ends by force, guile: hypocrite,
 "To-day, perchance to-morrow recognised
 "The rational man, the type of common sense."
 There's Loyola¹ adapted to our time!
 Under such guidance Guido plays his part,
 He also influencing in the due turn
 These last clods where I track intelligence
 By any glimmer, these four at his beck
 Ready to murder any, and, at their own,
 As ready to murder him, — such make the world!
 And, first effect of the new cause of things,
 There they lie also duly, — the old pair
 Of the weak head and not so wicked heart,
 With the one Christian mother, wife and girl,
 — Which three gifts seem to make an angel up, —
 The world's first foot o' the dance is on their heads!

¹ Loyola: Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the order of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits.

Still, I stand here, not off the stage though
close

On the exit: and my last act, as my first,
I owe the scene, and Him who armed me
thus

With Paul's sword as with Peter's key. I
smite

With my whole strength once more, ere end
my part,

Ending, so far as man may, this offence.
And when I raise my arm, who plucks my
sleeve?

Who stops me in the righteous function, —
foe

Or friend? Oh, still as ever, friends are
they

Who, in the interest of outraged truth
Deprecate such rough handling of a lie!

The facts being proved and incontestable,
What is the last word I must listen to?

Perchance — "Spare yet a term this barren
stock

"We pray thee dig about and dung and
dress

"Till he repent and bring forth fruit even
yet!"

Perchance — "So poor and swift a punish-
ment

"Shall throw him out of life with all that
sin:

"Let mercy rather pile up pain on pain
"Till the flesh expiate what the soul pays
else!"

Nowise! Remonstrants on each side com-
mence

Instructing, there's a new tribunal now
Higher than God's — the educated man's!

Nice sense of honour in the human breast
Supersedes here the old coarse oracle —

Confirming none the less a point or so
Wherein blind predecessors worked aright

By rule of thumb: as when Christ said, —
when, where?

Enough, I find it pleaded in a place, —
"All other wrongs done, patiently I take:

"But touch my honour and the case is
changed!

"I feel the due resentment, — *nemini*
"*Honorem trado*¹ is my quick retort."

Right of Him, just as if pronounced to-
day!

Still, should the old authority be mute
Or doubtful or in speaking clash with new,

The younger takes permission to decide.
At last we have the instinct of the world

Ruling its household without tutelage:
And while the two laws, human and di-
vine,

Have busied finger with this tangled case,
In pushes the brisk junior, cuts the knot,

Pronounces for acquittal. How it trips

Silverly o'er the tongue! "Remit the
death!

"Forgive, . . . well, in the old way, if
thou please,

"Decency and the relics of routine
"Respected, — let the Count go free as
air!

"Since he may plead a priest's immu-
nity, —

"The minor orders help enough for that,
"With Farinacci's licence, — who decides 50

"That the mere implication of such man,
"So privileged, in any cause, before

"Whatever Court except the Spiritual,
"Straight quashes law-procedure, — quash
it, then!

"Remains a pretty loophole of escape
"Moreover, that, beside the patent fact

"O' the law's allowance, there's involved
the weal

"O' the Popedom: a son's privilege at
stake,

"Thou wilt pretend the Church's interest,
"Ignore all finer reasons to forgive! 60

"But herein lies the crowning cogency —
"(Let thy friends teach thee while thou
tellest beads)

"That in this case the spirit of culture
speaks,

"Civilisation is imperative.
"To her shall we remand all delicate points

"Henceforth, nor take irregular advice
"O' the sly, as heretofore: she used to
hint

"Remonstrances, when law was out of
sorts

"Because a saucy tongue was put to rest,
"An eye that roved was cured of arrogance: 70

"But why be forced to mumble under
breath

"What soon shall be acknowledged as
plain fact,

"Outspoken, say, in thy successor's time?
"Methinks we see the golden age return!

"Civilisation and the Emperor
"Succeed to Christianity and Pope.

"One Emperor then, as one Pope now:
meanwhile,

"Anticipate a little! We tell thee 'Take
"Guido's life, sapped society shall crash,

"Whereof the main prop was, is, and shall 80
be

"— Supremacy of husband over wife!
"Does the man rule i' the house, and may
his mate

"Because of any plea dispute the same?
"Oh, pleas of all sorts shall abound, be
sure,

"One but allowed validity, — for, harsh
"And savage, for, inept and silly-sooth,

"For, this and that, will the ingenious sex
"Demonstrate the best master e'er graced
slave:

'And there's but one short way to end the
 coil, —
 'Acknowledge right and reason steadily
 'I' the man and master: then the wife
 submits
 'To plain truth broadly stated. Does the
 time
 'Advise we shift — a pillar? nay, a stake
 'Out of its place i' the social tenement?
 'One touch may send a shudder through
 the heap
 'And bring it toppling on our children's
 heads!
 'Moreover, if ours breed a qualm in thee,
 'Give thine own better feeling play for
 once!
 'Thou, whose own life winks o'er the
 socket-edge,
 'Wouldst thou it went out in such ugly
 snuff
 'As dooming sons dead, e'en though
 justice prompt?
 'Why, on a certain feast, Barabbas' self
 'Was set free, not to cloud the general
 cheer:
 'Neither shalt thou pollute thy Sabbath
 close!
 'Mercy is safe and graceful. How one
 hears
 'The howl begin, scarce the three little
 taps!¹
 'O' the silver mallet silent on thy brow, —
 'His last act was to sacrifice a Count
 'And thereby screen a scandal of the
 Church!
 'Guido condemned, the Canon justified
 'Of course, — delinquents of his cloth go
 free!
 'And so the Luthers chuckle, Calvins
 scowl,
 'So thy hand helps Molinos to the chair
 'Whence he may hold forth till doom's
 day on just
 'These *petit-maitre* priestlings, — in the
 choir
 '*Sanctus et Benedictus*, with a brush
 'Of soft guitar-strings that obey the
 thumb,
 'Touched by the bedside, for accompani-
 ment!
 'Does this give umbrage to a husband?
 Death
 'To the fool, and to the priest impunity!
 'But no impunity to any friend
 'So simply over loyal as these four
 'Who made religion of their patron's
 cause,
 'Believed in him and did his bidding
 straight,

¹ *The three little taps*: when a pope dies, the Cardinal Camerlengo has to assure himself of his death by tapping thrice on his forehead with a silver mallet.

"Asked not one question but laid down
 the lives
 "This Pope took, — all four lives together
 make
 "Just his own length of days, — so, dead
 they lie,
 "As these were times when loyalty's a
 drug,
 "And zeal in a subordinate too cheap
 "And common to be saved when we spend
 life!
 "Come, 'tis too much good breath we
 waste in words:
 "The pardon, Holy Father! Spare
 grimace,
 "Shrugs and reluctance! Are not we the
 world,
 "Art not thou Priam? Let soft culture
 plead
 "Hecuba-like, '*non tali*'² (Virgil serves)
 "'*Auxilio*' and the rest! Enough, it
 works!
 "The Pope relaxes, and the Prince is loth,
 "The father's bowels yearn, the man's
 will bends,
 "Reply is apt. Our tears on tremble,
 hearts
 "Big with a benediction, wait the word
 "Shall circulate thro' the city in a trice,
 "Set every window flaring, give each man
 "O' the mob his torch to wave for grati-
 tude.
 "Pronounce then, for our breath and
 patience fail!"

I will, Sirs: but a voice other than yours
 quickens my spirit. "*Quis pro Domino?*
 "Who is upon the Lord's side?" asked the
 Count.

6c

I, who write —

"On receipt of this command,
 "Acquaint Count Guido and his fellows
 four
 "They die to-morrow: could it be to-
 night,
 "The better, but the work to do, takes
 time.
 "Set with all diligence a scaffold up,
 "Not in the customary place, by Bridge
 "Saint Angelo, where die the common
 sort;
 "But since the man is noble, and his
 peers
 "By predilection haunt the People's
 Square,
 "There let him be beheaded in the midst,
 "And his companions hanged on either
 side:
 "So shall the quality see, fear and learn.

² *Non tali auxilio*: Virgil, *Æn.* II. 521—
 "not with such aid" as thine is religion to be
 benefited, any more than Troy could be saved
 by Priam's arms.

"All which work takes time: till to-morrow, then,
 "Let there be prayer incessant for the five!"

For the main criminal I have no hope
 Except in such a suddenness of fate.
 I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
 I could have scarce conjectured there was earth

Anywhere, sky or sea or world at all:
 But the night's black was burst through by
 a blaze —

Thunder struck blow on blow, earth
 groaned and bore,

10 Through her whole length of mountain
 visible:

There lay the city thick and plain with
 spires,

And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the
 sea.

So may the truth be flashed out by one
 blow,

And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.
 Else I avert my face, nor follow him
 Into that sad obscure sequestered state
 Where God unmakes but to remake the soul

He else made first in vain; which must
 not be.

Enough, for I may die this very night:

20 And how should I dare die, this man let
 live?

Carry this forthwith to the Governor!

XI. — GUIDO.

You are the Cardinal Acciaiuoli, and you,
 Abate Panciatichi — two good Tuscan
 names:

Acciaiuoli — ah, your ancestor it was
 Built the huge battlemented convent-
 block

Over the little forky flashing Greve
 That takes the quick turn at the foot o' the
 hill

Just as one first sees Florence: oh those
 days!

'Tis Ema, though, the other rivulet,

30 The one-arched brown brick bridge yawns
 over, — yes,

Gallop and go five minutes, and you gain
 The Roman Gate from where the Ema's
 bridged:

Kingfishers fly there: how I see the bend
 O'erturreted by Certosa which he built,
 That Senescal (we styled him) of your
 House!

I do adjure you, help me, Sirs! My blood
 Comes from as far a source: ought it to
 end

This way, by leakage through their scaf-
 fold-planks

Into Rome's sink where her red refuse
 runs?

Sirs, I beseech you by blood-sympathy, 44
 If there be any vile experiment

In the air, — if this your visit simply prove,
 When all's done, just a well-intentioned
 trick

That tries for truth truer than truth itself,
 By startling up a man, ere break of day,

To tell him he must die at sunset, —
 pshaw!

That man's a Franceschini; feel his pulse,
 Laugh at your folly, and let's all go
 sleep!

You have my last word, — innocent am I
 As Innocent my Pope and murderer, 50

Innocent as a babe, as Mary's own,
 As Mary's self, — I said, say and re-
 peat, —

And why, then, should I die twelve
 hours hence? I —

Whom, not twelve hours ago, the gaoler
 bade

Turn to my straw-truss, settle and sleep
 sound

That I might wake the sooner, promptlier
 pay

His due of meat-and-drink-indulgence,
 cross

His palm with fee of the good-hand, be-
 side,

As gallants use who go at large again!
 For why? All honest Rome approved my 60
 part;

Whoever owned wife, sister, daughter, —
 nay,

Mistress, — had any shadow of any right
 That looks like right, and, all the more
 resolved,

Held it with tooth and nail, — these manly
 men

Approved! I being for Rome, Rome was
 for me.

Then, there's the point reserved, the sub-
 terfuge

My lawyers held by, kept for last resource,
 Firm should all else, — the impossible
 fancy! — fail,

And sneaking burgess-spirit win the day.
 The knaves! One plea at least would 70
 hold, — they laughed, —

One grappling-iron scratch the bottom-
 rock

Even should the middle mud let anchor
 go!

I hooked my cause on to the Clergy's, —
 plea

Which, even if law tipped off my hat and
 plume,

Revealed my priestly tonsure, saved me so.
 The Pope moreover, this old Innocent,
 Being so meek and mild and merciful,

So fond o' the poor and so fatigued of
 earth,

So . . . fifty thousand devils in deepest hell!
 Why must he cure us of our strange conceit
 Of the angel in man's likeness, that we loved
 And looked should help us at a pinch? He help?
 He pardon? Here's his mind and message — death!
 Thank the good Pope! Now, is he good in this,
 Never mind, Christian, — no such stuff's extant, —
 But will my death do credit to his reign,
 Show he both lived and let live, so was good?
 Cannot I live if he but like? "The law!"
 Why, just the law gives him the very chance,
 The precise measure to let my life alone,
 Which the archangelic soul of him (he says)
 Years after! Here they drop it in his palm,
 My lawyers, capital o' the cursed kind, —
 Drop life to take and hold and keep: but no!
 He sighs, shakes head, refuses to shut hand,
 Motions away the gift they bid him grasp,
 And of the coyness comes — that off I run
 And down I go, he best knows whither! mind,
 He knows, who sets me rolling all the same!
 Disinterested Vicar of our Lord,
 This way he abrogates and disallows,
 Nullifies and ignores, — reverts in fine
 To the good and right, in detriment of me!
 Talk away! Will you have the naked truth?
 He's sick of his life's supper, — swallowed lies:
 So, hobbling bedward, needs must ease his maw
 Just where I sit o' the door-sill. Sir Abate,
 Can you do nothing? Friends, we used to irk:
 What of this sudden slash in a friend's face,
 This cut across our good companionship
 That showed its front so gay when both were young?
 Were not we put into a beaten path,
 Bid pace the world, we nobles born and bred,
 We body of friends with each his scutcheon full
 Of old achievement and impunity, —
 Taking the laugh of morn and Sol's salute
 As forth we fared, pricked on to breathe our steeds
 And take equestrian sport over the green 45
 Under the blue, across the crop, — what care?
 If we went prancing up hill and down dale,
 In and out of the level and the straight,
 By the bit of pleasant byeway, where was harm?
 Still Sol salutes me and the morning laughs:
 I see my grandsire's hoof-prints, — point the spot
 Where he drew rein, slipped saddle, and stabbed knave
 For daring throw gibe — much less, stone — from pale:
 Then back, and on, and up with the cavalcade.
 Just so wend we, now canter, now converse, 50
 Till, 'mid the jauncing pride and jaunty port,
 Something of a sudden jerks at somebody —
 A dagger is out, a flashing cut and thrust,
 Because I play some prank my grandsire played,
 And here I sprawl: where is the company? Gone!
 A trot and a trample! only I lie trapped,
 Writhe in a certain novel springe just set
 By the good old Pope: I'm first prize. Warn me? Why?
 Apprise me that the law o' the game is changed?
 Enough that I'm a warning, as I writhe, 60
 To all and each my fellows of the file,
 And make law plain henceforward past mistake,
 "For such a prank, death is the penalty!"
 Pope the Five Hundredth (what do I know or care?)
 Deputes your Eminency and Abateship
 To announce that, twelve hours from this time, he needs
 I just essay upon my body and soul
 The virtue of his brand-new engine, prove
 Repressor of the pranksome! I'm the first!
 Thanks. Do you know what teeth you 70
 mean to try
 The sharpness of, on this soft neck and throat?
 I know it, — I have seen and hate it, — ay,
 As you shall, while I tell you! Let me talk,
 Or leave me, at your pleasure! talk I must:
 What is your visit but my lure to talk?
 Nay, you have something to disclose? — a smile,
 At end of the forced sternness, means to mock

The heart-beats here? I call your two hearts stone!

Is your charge to stay with me till I die? Be tacit as your bench, then! Use your ears,

I use my tongue: how glibly yours will run

At pleasant supper-time . . . God's curse! . . . to-night

When all the guests jump up, begin so brisk

"Welcome, his Eminence who shrived the wretch!

"Now we shall have the Abate's story!"

Life!

How I could spill this overplus of mine
 to Among those hoar-haired, shrunk-shanked odds and ends

Of body and soul old age is chewing dry! Those windlestraws that stare while purblind death

Mows here, mows there, makes hay of juicy me,

And misses just the bunch of withered weed

Would brighten hell and streak its smoke with flame!

How the life I could shed yet never shrink,

Would drench their stalks with sap like grass in May!

Is it not terrible, I entreat you, Sirs? — With manifold and plenitudinous life,

to Prompt at death's menace to give blow for threat,

Answer his "Be thou not!" by "Thus I am!" —

Terrible so to be alive yet die?

How I live, how I see! so, — how I speak!

Lucidity of soul unlocks the lips:

I never had the words at will before.

How I see all my folly at a glance!

"A man requires a woman and a wife:"

There was my folly; I believed the saw.

I knew that just myself concerned myself,

to Yet needs must look for what I seemed to lack,

In a woman, — why, the woman's in the man!

Fools we are, how we learn things when too late!

Overmuch life turns round my woman-side:

The male and female in me, mixed before, Settle of a sudden: I'm my wife outright

In this unmanly appetite for truth, This careless courage as to consequence,

This instantaneous sight through things and through,

This voluble rhetoric, if you please, — 'tis she!

Here you have that Pompilia whom I slew, Also the folly for which I slew her!

Fool!

And, fool-like, what is it I wander from? What did I say of your sharp iron tooth?

Ah, — that I know the hateful thing! this way.

I chanced to stroll forth, many a good year gone,

One warm Spring eve in Rome, and un- aware

Looking, mayhap, to count what stars were out,

Came on your fine axe in a frame, that falls

And so cuts off a man's head underneath, Mannaia, — thus we made acquaintance first:

Out of the way, in a by-part o' the town, At the Mouth-of-Truth o' the river-side,

you know: One goes by the Capitol: and wherefore

coy, Retiring out of crowded noisy Rome?

Because a very little time ago It had done service, chopped off head from

trunk Belonging to a fellow whose poor house

The thing must make a point to stand before —

Felice Whatsoever-was-the-name Who stabled buffaloes and so gained bread,

(Our clowns unyoke them in the ground hard by)

And, after use of much improper speech, Had struck at Duke Some-title-or-other's

face, Because he kidnapped, carried away and

kept Felice's sister who would sit and sing

I' the filthy doorway while she plaited fringe

To deck the brutes with, — on their gear it goes, —

The good girl with the velvet in her voice So did the Duke, so did Felice, so

Did Justice, intervening with her axe. There the man-mutilating engine stood

At ease, both gay and grim, like a Swiss guard

Off duty, — purified itself as well, Getting dry, sweet and proper for next

week, — And doing incidental good, 'twas hoped,

To the rough lesson-lacking populace Who now and then, forsooth, must right

their wrongs! There stood the twelve-foot-square of scaffold, railed

Considerately round to elbow-height, For fear an officer should tumble thence

And sprain his ankle and be lame a month Through starting when the axe fell and

head too!

Railed likewise were the steps whereby
'twas reached.
All of it painted red: red, in the midst,
Ran up two narrow tall beams barred
across,
Since from the summit, some twelve feet
to reach,
The iron plate with the sharp shearing
edge
Had slammed, jerked, shot, slid, — I
shall soon find which! —
And so lay quiet, fast in its fit place,
The wooden half-moon collar, now
eclipsed
By the blade which blocked its curvature:
apart,
The other half, — the under half-moon
board
Which, helped by this, completes a neck's
embrace, —
Joined to a sort of desk that wheels aside
Out of the way when done with, — down
you kneel,
In you're pushed, over you the other drops,
Tight you're clipped, whiz, there's the
blade cleaves its best,
Out trundles body, down flops head on
floor,
And where's your soul gone? That, too,
I shall find!
This kneeling-place was red, red, never
fear!
But only slimy-like with paint, not blood,
For why? a decent pitcher stood at hand,
A broad dish to hold sawdust, and a broom
By some unnamed utensil, — scraper-
rake, —
Each with a conscious air of duty done.
Underneath, loungers, — boys and some
few men, —
Discours'd this platter, named the other
tool,
Just as, when grooms tie up and dress a
steed,
Boys lounge and look on, and elucubrate
What the round brush is used for, what the
square, —
So was explained — to me the skill-less
then —
The manner of the grooming for next world
Undergone by Felice What's-his-name.
There's no such lovely month in Rome as
May —
May's crescent is no half-moon of red
plank,
And came now tilting o'er the wave i' the
west,
One greenish-golden sea, right 'twixt
those bars
Of the engine — I began acquaintance
with,
Understood, hated, hurried from before,
To have it out of sight and cleanse my
soul!

Here it is all again, conserved for use:
Twelve hours hence, I may know more, 43
not hate worse.

That young May-moon-month! Devils
of the deep!

Was not a Pope then Pope as much as
now?

Used not he chirrup o'er the Merry Tales,
Chuckle, — his nephew so exact the wag
To play a jealous cullion such a trick
As wins the wife i' the pleasant story!
Well?

Why do things change? Wherefore is
Rome un-Romed?

I tell you, ere Felice's corpse was cold,
The Duke, that night, threw wide his
palace-doors,

Received the compliments o' the quality 50

For justice done him, — bowed and
smirked his best,

And in return passed round a pretty thing,
A portrait of Felice's sister's self,

Florid old rogue Albano's masterpiece,

As — better than virginity in rags —

Bouncing Europa on the back o' the bull:

They laughed and took their road the
safelier home.

Ah, but times change, there's quite another
Pope,

I do the Duke's deed, take Felice's place,
And, being no Felice, lout and clout, 60

Stomach but ill the phrase "I lose my
head!"

How euphemistic! Lose what? Lose
your ring,

Your snuff-box, tablets, kerchief! — but,
your head?

I learnt the process at an early age;

'Twas useful knowledge, in those same old
days,

To know the way a head is set on neck.

My fencing-master urged "Would you
excel?

"Rest not content with mere bold give-
and-guard,

"Nor pink the antagonist somehow-any-
how!

"See me dissect a little, and know your 74
game!

"Only anatomy makes a thrust the thing."

Oh Cardinal, those lithe live necks of ours!

Here go the vertebræ, here's *Atlas*, here

Axis, and here the symphyses stop short,

So wisely and well, — as, o'er a corpse, we
cant, —

And here's the silver cord which . . .

what's our word?

Depends from the gold bowl, which loosed
(not "lost")

Lets us from heaven to hell, — one chop,
we're loose!

"And not much pain i' the process,"
quoth a sage:

Who told him? Not Felice's ghost, I think!
 Such "losing" is scarce Mother Nature's mode.
 She fain would have cord ease itself away,
 Worn to a thread by threescore years and ten,
 Snap while we slumber: that seems bearable.
 I'm told one clot of blood extravasate
 Ends one as certainly as Roland's sword, —
 One drop of lymph suffused proves Oliver's mace, —
 Intruding, either of the pleasant pair,
 10 On the arachnoid tunic of my brain.
 'That's Nature's way of loosing cord! — but Art,
 How of Art's process with the engine here,
 When bow! and cord alike are crushed across,
 Bored between, bruised through? Why, if Fagon's self,
 The French Court's pride, that famed practitioner,
 Would pass his cold pale lightning of a knife,
 Pistoja-ware, adroit 'twixt joint and joint,
 With just a "See how facile, gentlefolk!" —
 The thing were not so bad to bear! Brute force
 20 Cuts as he comes, breaks in, breaks on, breaks out
 O' the hard and soft of you: is that the same?
 A lithe snake thrids the hedge, makes throb no leaf:
 A heavy ox sets chest to brier and branch,
 Bursts somehow through, and leaves one hideous hole
 Behind him!

And why, why must this needs be?
 Oh, if men were but good! They are not good,
 Nowise like Peter: people called him rough,
 But if, as I left Rome, I spoke the Saint,
 — "*Petrus, quo vadis?*"¹ — doubtless, I should hear,
 30 "To free the prisoner and forgive his fault!
 "I plucked the absolute dead from God's own bar,
 "And raised up Dorcas, — why not rescue thee?"

¹ *Petrus, quo vadis*: an allusion to the legend that St. Peter was leaving Rome on the outbreak of the Neronian persecution, when he met Christ coming towards the city, and addressed Him with the words, "*Domine, quo vadis?*" "Lord, whither goest Thou?" The answer was, "To Rome, to be crucified again"; whereupon Peter turned back and met his martyrdom.

What would cost one such nullifying word?
 If Innocent succeeds to Peter's place,
 Let him think Peter's thought, speak Peter's speech!
 I say, he is bound to it: friends, how say you?
 Concede I be all one bloodguiltiness
 And mystery of murder in the flesh,
 Why should that fact keep the Pope's mouth shut fast?
 He execrates my crime, — good! — sees hell yawn
 One inch from the red plank's end which I press, —
 Nothing is better! What's the consequence?
 How should a Pope proceed that knows his cue?
 Why, leave me linger out my minute here,
 Since close on death comes judgment and comes doom,
 Not crib at dawn its pittance from a sheep
 Destined ere dewfall to be butcher's-meat!
 Think, Sirs, if I have done you any harm,
 And you require the natural revenge,
 Suppose, and so intend to poison me,
 — Just as you take and slip into my draught
 The paperful of powder that clears scores,
 You notice on my brow a certain blue:
 How you both overset the wine at once!
 How you both smile! "Our enemy has the plague!
 "Twelve hours hence he'll be scraping his bones bare
 "Of that intolerable flesh, and die,
 "Frenzied with pain: no need for poison here!
 "Step aside and enjoy the spectacle!"
 Tender for souls are you, Pope Innocent!
 Christ's maxim is — one soul outweighs the world:
 Respite me, save a soul, then, curse the world!
 "No," venerable sire, I hear you smirk,
 "No: for Christ's gospel changes names, not things,
 "Renews the obsolete, does nothing more!
 "Our fire-new gospel is re-tinkered law,
 "Our mercy, justice, — Jove's rechristened God, —
 "Nay, whereas, in the popular conceit,
 "'Tis pity that old harsh Law somehow limps,
 "Lingers on earth, although Law's day be done,
 "Else would benignant Gospel interpose,
 "Not furtively as now, but bold and frank
 "O'erflutter us with healing in her wings,
 "Law being harshness, Gospel only love —
 "We tell the people, on the contrary,
 "Gospel takes up the rod which Law lets fall;

"Mercy is vigilant when justice sleeps!
 "Does Law permit a taste of Gospel-grace?
 "The secular arm allow the spiritual power
 "To act for once? — no compliment so fine
 "As that our Gospel handsomely turn harsh,
 "Thrust victim back on Law the nice and coy!"
 Yes, you do say so, else you would forgive
 Me whom Law does not touch but tosses you!
 Don't think to put on the professional face!
 You know what I know: casuists as you are,
 Each nerve must creep, each hair start, sting and stand,
 At such illogical inconsequence!
 Dear my friends, do but see! A murder's tried,
 There are two parties to the cause: I'm one,
 — Defend myself, as somebody must do:
 I have the best o' the battle: that's a fact,
 Simple fact, — fancies find no place just now.
 What though half Rome condemned me?
 Half approved:
 And, none disputes, the luck is mine at last,
 All Rome, i' the main, acquitting me: whereon,
 What has the Pope to ask but "How finds Law?"
 "I find," replies Law, "I have erred this while:
 "Guilty or guiltless, Guido proves a priest,
 "No layman: he is therefore yours, not mine:
 "I bound him: loose him, you whose will is Christ's!"
 And now what does this Vicar of our Lord,
 Shepherd o' the flock, — one of whose charge bleats sore
 For crook's help from the quag wherein it drowns?
 Law suffers him employ the crumpled end:
 His pleasure is to turn staff, use the point,
 And thrust the shuddering sheep, he calls a wolf,
 Back and back, down and down to where hell gapes!
 "Guiltless," cries Law — "Guilty" corrects the Pope!
 "Guilty," for the whim's sake! "Guilty," he somehow thinks,
 And anyhow says: 'tis truth; he dares not lie!
 Others should do the lying. That's the cause

Brings you both here: I ought in decency
 Confess to you that I deserve my fate,
 Am guilty, as the Pope thinks, — ay, to the end,
 Keep up the jest, lie on, lie ever, lie 44
 I' the latest gasp of me! What reason, Sirs?
 Because to-morrow will succeed to-day
 For you, though not for me: and if I stick
 Still to the truth, declare with my last breath,
 I die an innocent and murdered man, —
 Why, there's the tongue of Rome will wag apace
 This time to-morrow: don't I hear the talk!
 "So, to the last he proved impenitent?
 "Pagans have said as much of martyred saints!
 "Law demurred, washed her hands of the 50
 whole case.
 "Prince Somebody said this, Duke Something, that.
 "Doubtless the man's dead, dead enough, don't fear!
 "But, hang it, what if there have been a spice,
 "A touch of . . . eh? You see, the Pope's so old,
 "Some of us add, obtuse: age never slips
 "The chance of shoving youth to face death first!"
 And so on. Therefore to suppress such talk
 You two come here, entreat I tell you lies,
 And end, the edifying way. I end,
 Telling the truth! Your self-styled shep- 60
 herd thieves!
 A thief — and how thieves hate the wolves we know:
 Damage to theft, damage to thrift, all's one!
 The red hand is sworn foe of the black jaw.
 That's only natural, that's right enough:
 But why the wolf should compliment the thief
 With shepherd's title, bark out life in thanks,
 And, spiteless, lick the prong that spits him, — eh,
 Cardinal? My Abate, scarcely thus!
 There, let my sheepskin-garb, a curse on't, go —
 Leave my teeth free if I must show my 74
 shag!
 Repent? What good shall follow? If I pass
 Twelve hours repenting, will that fact hold fast
 The thirteenth at the horrid dozen's end?
 If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash, tear,
 Foam, rave, to give your story the due grace,
 Will that assist the engine half-way back

- Into its hiding-house? — boards, shaking
now,
Bone against bone, like some old skeleton
bat
That wants, at winter's end, to wake and
prey!
Will howling put the spectre back to
sleep?
Ah, but I misconceive your object, Sirs!
Since I want new life like the creature, —
life,
Being done with here, begins i' the world
away:
I shall next have "Come, mortals, and be
judged!"
There's but a minute betwixt this and
then:
■ So, quick, be sorry since it saves my soul!
Sirs, truth shall save it, since no lies assist!
Hear the truth, you, whatever you style
yourselves,
Civilisation and society!
Come, one good grapple, I with all the
world!
Dying in cold blood is the desperate thing;
The angry heart explodes, bears off in
blaze
The indignant soul, and I'm combustion-
ripe.
Why, you intend to do your worst with me!
That's in your eyes! You dare no more
than death,
■ And mean no less. I must make up my
mind.
So Pietro, — when I chased him here and
there,
Morsel by morsel cut away the life
I loathed, — cried for just respite to confess
And save his soul: much respite did I
grant!
Why grant me respite who deserve my
doom?
Me — who engaged to play a prize, fight
you,
Knowing your arms, and foil you, trick
for trick,
At rapier-fence, your match and, may be,
more.
I knew that if I chose sin certain sins,
30 Solace my lusts out of the regular way
Prescribed me, I should find you in the
path,
Have to try skill with a redoubted foe;
You would lunge, I would parry, and make
end.
At last, occasion of a murder comes:
We cross blades, I, for all my brag, break
guard,
And in goes the cold iron at my breast,
Out at my back, and end is made of me.
You stand confessed the adroit sword-
man, — ay,
But on your triumph you increase, it seems,
- Want more of me than lying flat on face:
- I ought to raise my ruined head, allege
Not simply I pushed worse blade o' the
pair,
But my antagonist dispensed with steel!
There was no passage of arms, you looked
me low,
With brow and eye abolished cut and
thrust
Nor used the vulgar weapon! This chance
scratch,
This incidental hurt, this sort of hole
I' the heart of me? I stumbled, got it so!
Fell on my own sword as a bungler
may!
Yourself proscribe such heathen tools, and 5
trust
To the naked virtue: it was virtue stood
Unarmed and awed me, — on my brow
there burned
Crime out so plainly intolerably red,
That I was fain to cry — "Down to the
dust
"With me, and bury there brow, brand
and all!"
Law had essayed the adventure, — but
what's Law?
Morality exposed the Gorgon shield!
Morality and Religion conquer me.
If Law sufficed would you come here, en-
treat
I supplement law, and confess forsooth? 6
Did not the Trial show things plain
enough?
"Ah, but a word of the man's very self
"Would somehow put the keystone in its
place
"And crown the arch!" Then take the
word you want!
- I say that, long ago, when things began,
All the world made agreement, such and
such
Were pleasure-giving profit-bearing acts,
But henceforth extra-legal, nor to be:
You must not kill the man whose death
would please
And profit you, unless his life stop yours 7
Plainly, and need so be put aside:
Get the thing by a public course, by law,
Only no private bloodshed as of old!
All of us, for the good of every one,
Renounced such licence and conformed to
law:
Who breaks law, breaks pact therefore,
helps himself
To pleasure and profit over and above the
due,
And must pay forfeit, — pain beyond his
share:
For, pleasure being the sole good in the
world,
Anyone's pleasure turns to someone's pain, 8
So, law must watch for everyone, — say
we,

Who call things wicked that give too much joy,
 And nickname mere reprisal, envy makes,
 Punishment: quite right! thus the world goes round.
 I, being well aware such pact there was,
 I, in my time who found advantage come
 Of law's observance and crime's penalty,—
 Who, but for wholesome fear law bred in friends,
 Had doubtless given example long ago,
 Furnished forth some friend's pleasure with my pain,
 And, by my death, pieced out his scanty life, —
 I could not, for that foolish life of me,
 Help risking law's infringement, — I broke bond,
 And needs must pay price, — wherefore, here's my head,
 Flung with a flourish! But, repentance too?
 But pure and simple sorrow for law's breach
 Rather than blunderer's ineptitude?
 Cardinal, no! Abate, scarcely thus!
 'Tis the fault, not that I dared try a fall
 With Law and straightway am found undermost,
 But that I failed to see, above man's law,
 God's precept you, the Christians, recognise?
 Colly my cow! Don't fidget, Cardinal!
 Abate, cross your breast and count your beads
 And exorcise the devil, for here he stands
 And stiffens in the bristly nape of neck,
 Daring you drive him hence! You, Christians both?
 I say, if ever was such faith at all
 Born in the world, by your community
 Suffered to live its little tick of time,
 'Tis dead of age, now, ludicrously dead;
 Honour its ashes, if you be discreet,
 In epitaph only! For, concede its death,
 Allow extinction, you may boast unchecked
 What feats the thing did in a crazy land
 At a fabulous epoch, — treat your faith, that way,
 Just as you treat your relics: "Here's a shred
 "Of saintly flesh, a scrap of blessed bone,
 "Raised King Cophetua, who was dead, to life
 "In Mesopotamy twelve centuries since,
 "Such was its virtue!" — twangs the Sacristan,
 Holding the shrine-box up, with hands like feet
 Because of gout in every finger joint:
 Does he bethink him to reduce one knob,
 Allay one twinge by touching what he vaunts?

I think he half uncrooks fist to catch fee,
 But, for the grace, the quality of cure, —
 Cophetua was the man put that to proof!
 Not otherwise, your faith is shrined and shown
 And shamed at once: you banter while you bow!
 Do you dispute this? Come, a monster-
 laugh,
 A madman's laugh, allowed his Carnival
 Later ten days than when all Rome, but he,
 Laughed at the candle-contest: mine's alight,
 'Tis just it sputter till the puff o' the Pope
 End it to-morrow and the world turn Ash.
 Come, thus I wave a wand and bring to pass
 In a moment, in the twinkle of an eye,
 What but that — feigning everywhere grows fact,
 Professors turn possessors, realise
 The faith they play with as a fancy now, 60
 And bid it operate, have full effect
 On every circumstance of life, to-day,
 In Rome, — faith's flow set free at fountain-head!
 Now, you'll own, at this present, when I speak,
 Before I work the wonder, there's no man,
 Woman or child in Rome, faith's fountain-head,
 But might, if each were minded, realise
 Conversely unbelief, faith's opposite —
 Set it to work on life unflinchingly,
 Yet give no symptom of an outward 70
 change:
 Why should things change because men disbelieve
 What's incompatible, in the whited tomb,
 With bones and rottenness one inch below?
 What saintly act is done in Rome to-day
 But might be prompted by the devil, —
 "is"
 I say not, — "has been, and again may be," —
 I do say, full i' the face o' the crucifix
 You try to stop my mouth with! Off with it!
 Look in your own heart, if your soul have eyes!
 You shall see reason why, though faith 80
 were fled,
 Unbelief still might work the wires and move
 Man, the machine, to play a faithful part.
 Preside your college, Cardinal, in your cape,
 Or, — having got above his head, grown Pope, —
 Abate, gird your loins and wash my feet!
 Do you suppose I am at loss at all
 Why you crook, why you cringe, why fast or feast?

- Praise, blame, sit, stand, lie or go! — all
of it,
In each of you, purest unbelief may prompt,
And wit explain to who has eyes to see.
But, lo, I wave wand, make the false the
true!
Here's Rome believes in Christianity!
What an explosion, how the fragments
fly
Of what was surface, mask and make-
believe!
Begin now, — look at this Pope's-hal-
berdier
In wasp-like black and yellow foolery!
20 He, doing duty at the corridor,
Wakes from a muse and stands convinced
of sin!
Down he flings halbert, leaps the passage-
length,
Pushes into the presence, pantingly
Submits the extreme peril of the case
To the Pope's self, — whom in the world
beside? —
And the Pope breaks talk with ambassa-
dor,
Bids aside bishop, wills the whole world
wait
Till he secure that prize, outweighs the
world,
A soul, relieve the sentry of his qualm!
20 His Altitude the Referendary, —
Robed right, and ready for the usher's
word
To pay devoir, — is, of all times, just then
'Ware of a master-stroke of argument
Will cut the spinal cord . . . ugh, ugh!
. . . I mean,
Paralyse Molinism for evermore!
Straight he leaves lobby, trundles, two and
two,
Down steps to reach home, write, if but a
word
Shall end the impudence: he leaves who
likes
Go pacify the Pope: there's Christ to
serve!
30 How otherwise would men display their
zeal?
If the same sentry had the least surmise
A powder-barrel 'neath the pavement lay
In neighbourhood with what might prove
a match,
Meant to bend sky-high Pope and pres-
ence both —
Would he not break through courtiers,
rank and file,
Bundle up, bear off and save body so,
The Pope, no matter for his priceless soul?
There's no fool's-freak here, nought to
soundly swinge,
Only a man in earnest, you'll so praise
40 And pay and prate about, that earth shall
ring!
Had thought possessed the Referendary
- His jewel-case at home was left ajar,
What would be wrong in running, robes
awry,
To be beforehand with the pilferer?
What talk then of indecent haste? Which
means,
That both these, each in his degree, would
do
Just that, — for a comparative nothing's
sake,
And thereby gain approval and re-
ward, —
Which, done for what Christ says is worth
the world,
Procures the doer curses, cuffs and kicks. 5
I call such difference 'twixt act and act,
Sheer lunacy unless your truth on lip
Be recognised a lie in heart of you!
How do you all act, promptly or in doubt,
When there's a guest poisoned at supper
time
And he sits chatting on with spot on
cheek?
"Pluck him by the skirt, and round him in
the ears,
"Have at him by the beard, warn any-
how!"
Good, and this other friend that's cheat
and thief
And dissolute, — go stop the devil's feast, 6
Withdraw him from the imminent hell-
fire!
Why, for your life, you dare not tell your
friend
"You lie, and I admonish you for Christ!"
Who yet dare seek that same man at the
Mass
To warn him — on his knees, and tinkle 1
near, —
He left a cask a-tilt, a tap unturned,
The Trebbian running: what a grateful
jump
Out of the Church rewards your vigilance!
Perform that self-same service just a
thought
More maladroitley, — since a bishop sits 7
At function! — and he budges not, bites
lip, —
"You see my case: how can I quit my
post?
"He has an eye to any such default.
"See to it, neighbour, I beseech your love!"
He and you know the relative worth of
things,
What is permissible or inopportune.
Contort your brows! You know I speak
the truth:
Gold is called gold, and dross called dross,
i' the Book:
Gold you let lie and dross pick up and
prize!
- 1 *Tinkle*: the ringing of the bell which de-
notes the elevation of the Host.

— Despite your muster of some fifty monks
 And nuns a-maundering here and mump-
 ing there,
 Who could, and on occasion would, spurn
 dress,
 Clutch gold, and prove their faith a fact so
 far,
 I grant you! Fifty times the number
 squeak
 And gibber in the madhouse—firm of
 faith,
 This fellow, that his nose supports the
 moon;
 The other, that his straw hat crowns him
 Pope:
 Does that prove all the world outside in-
 sane?
 Do fifty miracle-mongers match the mob
 That acts on the frank faithless principle,
 Born-baptized-and-bred Christian-athe-
 ists, each
 With just as much a right to judge as
 you,—
 As many senses in his soul, and nerves
 I' neck of him as I,—whom, soul and
 sense,
 Neck and nerve, you abolish presently, —
 I being the unit in creation now
 Who pay the Maker, in this speech of mine,
 A creature's duty, spend my last of
 breath
 In bearing witness, even by my worst
 fault,
 To the creature's obligation, absolute,
 Perpetual: my worst fault protests, "The
 faith
 "Claims all of me: I would give all she
 claims,
 "But for a spice of doubt: the risk's too
 rash:
 "Double or quits, I play, but all or nought,
 "Exceeds my courage: therefore, I de-
 scend
 "To the next faith with no dubiety —
 "Faith in the present life, made last as
 long
 "And prove as full of pleasure as may
 hap,
 "Whatever pain it cause the world." I'm
 wrong?
 I've had my life, whate'er I lose: I'm
 right?
 I've got the single good there was to gain.
 Entire faith, or else complete unbelief!
 Aught between has my loathing and con-
 tempt,
 Mine and God's also, doubtless: ask
 yourself,
 Cardinal, where and how you like a man!
 Why, either with your feet upon his head,
 Confessed your caudatory,¹ or, at large,

¹ Caudatory: attached to your train.

The stranger in the crowd who caps to you
 But keeps his distance, — why should he 40
 presume?
 You want no hanger-on and dropper-off,
 Now yours, and now not yours but quite
 his own,
 According as the sky looks black or bright.
 Just so I capped to and kept off from
 faith —
 You promised trudge behind through fair
 and foul,
 Yet leave i' the lurch at the first spit of
 rain.
 Who holds to faith whenever rain begins?
 What does the father when his son lies
 dead,
 The merchant when his money-bags take
 wing,
 The politician whom a rival ousts? 50
 No case but has its conduct, faith pre-
 scribes:
 Where's the obedience that shall edify?
 Why, they laugh frankly in the face of
 faith
 And take the natural course, — this rends
 his hair
 Because his child is taken to God's breast,
 That gnashes teeth and raves at loss of
 trash
 Which rust corrupts and thieves break
 through and steal,
 And this, enabled to inherit earth
 Through meekness, curses till your blood
 runs cold!
 Down they all drop to my low level, rest 60
 Heart upon dungy earth that's warm and
 soft,
 And let who please attempt the altitudes.
 Each playing prodigal son of heavenly
 sire,
 Turning his nose up at the fatted calf,
 Fain to fill belly with the husks, we
 swine
 Did eat by born depravity of taste!
 Enough of the hypocrites. But you, Sirs,
 you —
 Who never budged from litter where I
 lay,
 And buried snout i' the draff-box while I
 fed,
 Cried amen to my creed's one article — 70
 "Get pleasure, 'scape pain, — give your
 preference
 "To the immediate good, for time is brief,
 "And death ends good and ill and every-
 thing!
 "What's got is gained, what's gained soon
 is gained twice,
 "And, — inasmuch as faith gains most, —
 feign faith!"
 So did we brother-like pass word about:
 — You, now, — like bloody drunkards but
 half-drunk,

- Who fool men yet perceive men find them
fools, —
Vexed that a titter gains the gravest
mouth, —
O' the sudden you must needs re-introduce
Solemnity, straight sober undue mirth
By a blow dealt me your boon companion
here
Who, using the old licence, dreamed of
harm
No more than snow in harvest: yet it
falls!
You check the merriment effectually
By pushing your abrupt machine i' the
midst,
o Making me Rome's example: blood for
wine!
The general good needs that you chop and
change!
I may dislike the hocus-pocus, — Rome,
The laughter-loving people, won't they
stare
Chap-fallen! — while serious natures ser-
monise
"The magistrate, he beareth not the sword
"In vain; who sins may taste its edge, we
see!"
Why my sin, drunkards? Where have I
abused
Liberty, scandalised you all so much?
Who called me, who crooked finger till I
came,
50 Fool that I was, to join companionship?
I knew my own mind, meant to live my life,
Elude your envy, or else make a stand,
Take my own part and sell you my life
dear.
But it was "Fie! No prejudice in the
world
"To the proper manly instinct! Cast
your lot
"Into our lap, one genius ruled our
births,
"We'll compass joy by concert; take with
us
"The regular irregular way i' the wood;
"You'll miss no game through riding
breast by breast,
30 "In this preserve, the Church's park and
pale,
"Rather than outside where the world
lies waste!"
Come, if you said not that, did you say
this?
Give plain and terrible warning, "Live,
enjoy?
"Such life begins in death and ends in
hell!
"Dare you bid us assist your sins, us
priests
"Who hurry sin and sinners from the
earth?
"No such delight for us, why then for
you?
- "Leave earth, seek heaven or find its
opposite!"
Had you so warned me, not in lying words
But veritable deeds with tongues of flame.
That had been fair, that might have struck
a man,
Silenced the squabble between soul and
sense,
Compelled him to make mind up, take one
course
Or the other, peradventure! — wrong or
right,
Foolish or wise, you would have been at
least
Sincere, no question, — forced me choose,
indulge
Or else renounce my instincts, still play
wolf
Or find my way submissive to your fold,
Be red-crossed on my fleece, one sheep the
more.
But you as good as bade me wear sheep's
wool
Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide the
noise
By mimicry of something like a bleat, —
Whence it comes that because, despite my
care,
Because I smack my tongue too loud for
once,
Drop baaing, here's the village up in arms!
Have at the wolf's throat, you who hate the
breed!
Oh, were it only open yet to choose —
One little time more — whether I'd be
free
Your foe, or subsidised your friend for-
sooth!
Should not you get a growl through the
white fangs
In answer to your beckoning! Cardinal,
Abate, managers o' the multitude,
I'd turn your gloved hands to account, be
sure!
You should manipulate the coarse rough
mob:
'Tis you I'd deal directly with, not them, —
Using your fears: why touch the thing
myself
When I could see you hunt, and then cry
"Shares!
"Quarter the carcase or we quarrel; come,
"Here's the world ready to see justice
done!"
Oh, it had been a desperate game, but 7
game
Wherein the winner's chance were worth
the pains!
We'd try conclusions! — at the worst,
what worse
Than this Mannaia-machine, each min-
ute's talk
Helps push an inch the nearer me? Fool,
fool!

You understand me and forgive, sweet
Sirs?

I blame you, tear my hair and tell my
woe —

All's but a flourish, figure of rhetoric!
One must try each expedient to save life.
One makes fools look foolisher fifty-fold
By putting in their place men wise like
you,

To take the full force of an argument
Would buffet their stolidity in vain.
If you should feel aggrieved by the mere
wind

O' the blow that means to miss you and
maul them,

That's my success! Is it not folly, now,
To say with folk, "A plausible defence —
"We see through notwithstanding, and re-
ject?"

Reject the plausible they do, these fools,
Who never even make pretence to show
One point beyond its plausibility
In favour of the best belief they hold!

"Saint Somebody-or-other raised the
... dead:"

Did he? How do you come to know as
much?

"Know it, what need? The story's plaus-
ible,

"Avouched for by a martyrologist,
"And why should good men sup on cheese
and leeks

"On such a saint's day, if there were no
saint?"

I praise the wisdom of these fools, and
straight

Tell them my story — "plausible, but
false!"

False, to be sure! What else can story be
That runs — a young wife tired of an old
spouse,

Found a priest whom she fled away with, —
both

Took their full pleasure in the two-days'
flight,

Which a grey-headed greyer-hearted pair,
(Whose best boast was, their life had been
a lie)

Helped for the love they bore all liars. Oh,
Here incredulity begins! Indeed?

Allow then, were no one point strictly true,
There's that if the tale might seem like
truth at least

To the unlucky husband, — jaundiced
patch —

Jealousy maddens people, why not him?
Say, he was maddened, so forgivable!

Humanity pleads that though the wife were
true,

The priest true, and the pair of liars true,
They might seem false to one man in the
world!

A thousand gnats make up a serpent's
sting,

And many sly soft stimulants to wrath
Compose a formidable wrong at last
That gets called easily by some one name
Not applicable to the single parts,
And so draws down a general revenge,
Excessive if you take crime, fault by fault.
Jealousy! I have known a score of plays,
Were listened to and laughed at in my 54
time

As like the everyday-life on all sides,
Wherein the husband, mad as a March
hare,

Suspected all the world contrived his
shame.

What did the wife? The wife kissed both
eyes blind,

Explained away ambiguous circumstance,
And while she held him captive by the
hand,

Crowned his head, — you know what's
the mockery, —

By half her body behind the curtain.
That's

Nature now! That's the subject of a piece
I saw in Vallombrosa Convent, made 64

Expressly to teach men what marriage
was!

But say "Just so did I misapprehend,
"Imagine she deceived me to my face,"

And that's pretence too easily seen
through!

All those eyes of all husbands in all plays,
At stare like one expanded peacock-tail,

Are laughed at for pretending to be
keen

While horn-blind: but the moment I step
forth —

Oh, I must needs o' the sudden prove a
lynx

And look the heart, that stone-wall, 74
through and through!

Such an eye, God's may be, — not yours
nor mine.

Yes, presently . . . what hour is fleeting
now?

When you cut earth away from under me,
I shall be left alone with, pushed beneath

Some such an apparitional dread orb
As the eye of God, since such an eye there
glares:

I fancy it go filling up the void
Above my mote-self it devours, or what

Proves — wrath, immensity wreaks on
nothingness.

Just how I felt once, couching through the 84
dark,

Hard by Vittiano; young I was, and gay,
And wanting to trap fieldfares: first a

spark
Tipped a bent, as a mere dew-globule
might

Any stiff grass-stalk on the meadow, —
this

Grew fiercer, flamed out full, and proved
the sun.
What do I want with proverbs, precepts
here?
Away with man! What shall I say to
God?
This, if I find the tongue and keep the
mind —
"Do Thou wipe out the being of me, and
smear
'This soul from off Thy white of things, I
blot!
"I am one huge and sheer mistake, —
whose fault?
"Not mine at least, who did not make my-
self!"
Someone declares my wife excused me so!
10 Perhaps she knew what argument to use.
Grind your teeth, Cardinal: Abate,
writhe!
What else am I to cry out in my rage,
Unable to repent one particle
O' the past? Oh, how I wish some cold
wise man
Would dig beneath the surface which you
scrape,
Deal with the depths, pronounce on my
desert
Groundedly! I want simple sober sense,
That asks, before it finishes with a dog,
Who taught the dog that trick you hang
him for?
20 You both persist to call that act a crime,
Which sense would call . . . yes, I main-
tain it, Sirs, . . .
A blunder! At the worst, I stood in
doubt
On cross-road, took one path of many
paths:
It leads to the red thing, we all see now,
But nobody saw at first: one primrose-
patch
In bank, one singing-bird in bush, the less,
Had warned me from such wayfare: let
me prove!
Put me back to the cross-road, start afresh!
Advise me when I take the first false step!
30 Give me my wife: how should I use my
wife,
Love her or hate her? Prompt my action
now!
There she is, there she stands alive and
pale,
The thirteen-years'-old child, with milk
for blood,
Pompilia Comparini, as at first,
Which first is only four brief years ago!
I stand too in the little ground-floor room
O' the father's house at Via Vittoria: see!
Her so-called mother, — one arm round the
waist
O' the child to keep her from the toys, let
fall
40 At wonder I can live yet look so grim, —

Ushers her in, with deprecating wave
Of the other, — and she fronts me loose
at last,
Held only by the mother's finger-tip.
Struck dumb, — for she was white
enough before! —
She eyes me with those frightened balls o'
black,
As heifer — the old simile comes pat —
Eyes tremblingly the altar and the priest
The amazed look, all one insuppressive
prayer, —
Might she but breathe, set free as hereto-
fore,
Have this cup leave her lips unblistered,
bear
Any cross anywhither anyhow,
So but alone, so but apart from me!
You are touched? So am I, quite other-
wise,
If 'tis with pity. I resent my wrong,
Being a man: I only show man's soul
Through man's flesh: she sees mine, it
strikes her thus!
Is that attractive? To a youth per-
haps —
Calf-creature, one-part boy to three-parts
girl,
To whom it is a flattering novelty
That he, men use to motion from their
path,
Can thus impose, thus terrify in turn
A chit whose terror shall be changed apace
To bliss unbearable when grace and glow,
Prowess and pride descend the throne and
touch
Esther in all that pretty tremble, cured
By the dove o' the sceptre! But myself
am old,
O' the wane at least, in all things: what do
you say
To her who frankly thus confirms my
doubt?
I am past the prime, I scare the woman-
world,
Done-with that way: you like this piece of
news?
A little saucy rose-bud minx can strike
Death-damp into the breast of doughty
king
Though 'twere French Louis, — soul I
understand, —
Saying, by gesture of repugnance, just
"Sire, you are regal, puissant and so forth,
"But — young you have been, are not, nor
will be!"
In vain the mother nods, winks, bustles up,
"Count, girls incline to mature worth like
you!
"As for Pompilia, what's flesh, fish, or
fowl
"To one who apprehends no difference,
"And would accept you even were you
old

"As you are . . . youngish by her father's side?

"Trim but your beard a little, thin your bush

"Of eyebrow; and for presence, portliness, "And decent gravity, you beat a boy!"

Deceive yourself one minute, if you may, In presence of the child that so loves age, Whose neck writhes, cords itself against your kiss,

Whose hand you wring stark, rigid with despair!

Well, I resent this; I am young in soul, Nor old in body, — thews and sinews here, —

Though the vile surface be not smooth as once, —

Far beyond that first wheelwork which went wrong

Through the untempered iron ere 'twas proof:

I am the wrought man worth ten times the crude,

Would woman see what this declines to see, Declines to say "I see," — the officious word

That makes the thing, pricks on the soul to shoot

New fire into the half-used cinder, flesh! Therefore 'tis she begins with wronging me,

Who cannot but begin with hating her. Our marriage follows: there she stands again!

Why do I laugh? Why, in the very gripe

O' the jaws of death's gigantic skull, do I Grin back his grin, make sport of my own pangs?

Why from each clashing of his molars, ground

To make the devil bread from out my grist,

Leaps out a spark of mirth, a hellish toy?

Take notice we are lovers in a church, Waiting the sacrament to make us one

And happy! Just as bid, she bears herself,

Comes and kneels, rises, speaks, is silent, goes:

So have I brought my horse, by word and blow,

To stand stock-still and front the fire he dreads.

How can I other than remember this, Resent the very obedience? Gain thereby?

Yes, I do gain my end and have my will, — Thanks to whom? When the mother

speaks the word,

She obeys it — even to enduring me!

There had been compensation in revolt —

o Revolt's to quell: but martyrdom rehearsed.

But predetermined sainthood for the sake O' the mother! — "Go!" thought I, "we meet again!"

Pass the next weeks of dumb contented death,

She lives, — wakes up, installed in house and home,

Is mine, mine all day-long, all night long mine.

Good folk begin at me with open mouth, "Now, at least, reconcile the child to life!"

"Study and make her love . . . that is, endure

"The . . . hem! the . . . all of you though somewhat old,

"Till it amount to something, in her eye, 50

"As good as love, better a thousand times, —

"Since nature helps the woman in such strait,

"Makes passiveness her pleasure: failing which,

"What if you give up boy-and-girl-fools'-play

"And go on to wise friendship all at once?"

"Those boys and girls kiss themselves cold, you know,

"Till themselves tired and sink aside full soon

"To friendship, as they name satiety:

"Thither go you and wait their coming!" 60

Thanks, Considerate advisers, — but, fair play!

Had you and I, friends, started fair at first, We, keeping fair, might reach it, neck by neck,

This blessed goal, whenever fate so please: But why am I to miss the daisied mile?

The course begins with, why obtain the dust

Of the end precisely at the starting-point? Why quaff life's cup blown free of all the beads,

The bright red froth wherein our beard should steep

Before our mouth essay the black o' the wine?

Foolish, the love-fit? Let me prove it such 70

Like you, before like you I puff things clear!

"The best's to come, no rapture but content!

"Not love's first glory but a sober glow,

"Not a spontaneous outburst in pure boon,

"So much as, gained by patience, care and toil,

"Proper appreciation and esteem!"

Go preach that to your nephews, not to me

Who, tired i' the midway of my life, would stop

And take my first refreshment, pluck a rose:

What's this coarse woolly hip, worn smooth 80

of lef,

You counsel! I go plant in garden-plot

- Water with tears, manure with sweat and blood,
 In confidence the seed shall germinate
 And, for its very best, some far-off day,
 Grow big, and blow me out a dog-rose bell?
- Why must your nephews begin breathing
 spice
 O' the hundred-petalled Provence prodigy?
 Nay, more and worse, — would such my
 root bear rose —
 Prove really flower and favourite, not the
 kind
- That's queen, but those three leaves that
 make one cup
- 10 And hold the hedge-bird's breakfast, —
 then indeed
 The prize though poor would pay the care
 and toil!
 Respect we Nature that makes least as
 most,
 Marvellous in the minim! But this bud,
 Bit through and burned black by the
 tempter's tooth,
 This bloom whose best grace was the slug
 outside
 And the wasp inside its bosom, — call you
 "rose"?
- Claim no immunity from a weed's fate
 For the horrible present! What you call
 my wife
 I call a nullity in female shape,
- 20 Vapid disgust, soon to be pungent plague,
 When mixed with, made confusion and a
 curse
 By two abominable nondescripts,
 That father and that mother: think you
 see
 The dreadful bronze our boast, we Are-
 tines,
 The Etruscan monster, the three-headed
 thing,
 Bellerophon's foe! How name you the
 whole beast?
 You choose to name the body from one
 head,
 That of the simple kid which droops the
 eye,
 Hangs the neck and dies tenderly enough:
- 30 I rather see the griesly lion belch
 Flame out i' the midst, the serpent writhe
 her rings,
 Grafted into the common stock for tail,
 And name the brute, Chimæra which I
 slew!
 How was there ever more to be — (concede
 My wife's insipid harmless nullity) —
 Dissociation from that pair of plagues —
 That mother with her cunning and her
 cant —
 The eyes with first their twinkle of conceit,
 Then, dropped to earth in mock-demure-
 ness, — now,
- 40 The smile self-satisfied from ear to ear,
- Now, the prim pursed-up mouth's pro-
 truded lips,
 With deferential duck, slow swing of head,
 Tempting the sudden fist of man too
 much, —
 That owl-like screw of lid and rock of ruff!
 As for the father, — Cardinal, you know,
 The kind of idiot! — such are rife in Rome,
 But they wear velvet commonly; good
 fools,
 At the end of life, to furnish forth young
 folk
 Who grin and bear with imbecility:
 Since the stalled ass, the joker, sheds from
 jaw
 Corn, in the joke, for those who laugh or
 starve.
 But what say we to the same solemn beast
 Wagging his ears and wishful of our pat,
 When turned, with holes in hide and bones
 laid bare,
 To forage for himself i' the waste o' the
 world,
 Sir Dignity i' the dumps? Pat him? We
 drub
 Self-knowledge, rather, into frowzy pate,
 Teach Pietro to get trappings or go hang!
 Fancy this quondam oracle in vogue
 At Via Vittoria, this personified
 Authority when time was, — Pantaloon
 Flaunting his tom-fool tawdry just the
 same
 As if Ash-Wednesday were mid-Carnival!
 That's the extreme and unforgivable
 Of sins, as I account such. Have you
 stooped
 For your own ends to bestialise yourself
 By flattery of a fellow of this stamp?
 The ends obtained or else shown out of
 reach,
 He goes on, takes the flattery for pure
 truth, —
 "You love, and honour me, of course:
 what next?"
 What, but the trifle of the stabbing,
 friend? —
 Which taught you how one worships when
 the shrine
 Has lost the relic that we bent before.
 Angry! And how could I be otherwise?
 'Tis plain: this pair of old pretentious
 fools
 Meant to fool me: it happens, I fooled
 them.
 Why could not these who sought to buy
 and sell
 Me, — when they found themselves were
 bought and sold,
 Make up their mind to the proved rule of
 right,
 Be chattel and not chapman any more?
 Miscalculation has its consequence;
 But when the shepherd crooks a sheep-like
 thing

And meaning to get wool, dislodges fleece
 And finds the veritable wolf beneath,
 (How that staunch image serves at every
 turn!)
 Does he, by way of being politic,
 Pluck the first whisker grimly visible?
 Or rather grow in a trice all gratitude,
 Protest this sort-of-what-one-might-name
 sheep
 Beats the old other curly-coated kind,
 And shall share board and bed, if so it
 deign,
 10 With its discoverer, like a royal ram?
 Ay, thus, with chattering teeth and knock-
 ing knees,
 Would wisdom treat the adventure!
 these, forsooth,
 Tried whisker-plucking, and so found what
 trap
 The whisker kept perdue, two rows of
 teeth —
 Sharp, as too late the prying fingers felt.
 What would you have? The fools trans-
 gress, the fools
 Forthwith receive appropriate punishment:
 They first insult me, I return the blow,
 There follows noise enough: four hubbub
 months,
 20 Now hue and cry, now whimpering and
 wail —
 A perfect goose-yard cackle of complaint
 Because I do not gild the geese their oats, —
 I have enough of noise, ope wicket wide,
 Sweep out the couple to go whine else-
 where,
 Frightened a little, hurt in no respect,
 And am just taking thought to breathe
 again,
 Taste the sweet sudden silence all about,
 When, there they raise it, the old noise I
 know,
 At Rome! the distance! "What, begun
 once more?
 30 "Whine on, wail ever, 'tis the loser's
 right!"
 But eh, what sort of voice grows on the
 wind?
 Triumph it sounds and no complaint at
 all!
 And triumph it is. My boast was prema-
 ture:
 The creatures, I turned forth, clapped
 wing and crew
 Fighting-cock-fashion, — they had filched
 a pearl
 From dung-heap, and might boast with
 cause enough!
 I was defrauded of all bargained for:
 You know, the Pope knows, not a soul but
 knows
 My dowry was derision, my gain — muck,
 40 My wife, (the Church declared my flesh-
 blood)
 The nameless bastard of a common whore:
 My old name turned henceforth to . . .
 shall I say
 "He that received the ordure in his face?"
 And they who planned this wrong, per-
 formed this wrong,
 And then revealed this wrong to the wide
 world,
 Rounded myself in the ears with my own
 wrong, —
 Why, these were (note hell's lucky malice,
 now!)
 These were just they who, they alone,
 could act
 And publish and proclaim their infamy,
 Secure that men would in a breath believe 50
 Compassionate and pardon them, — for
 why?
 They plainly were too stupid to invent,
 Too simple to distinguish wrong from
 right, —
 Inconscious agents they, the silly-sooth,
 Of heaven's retributive justice on the strong
 Proud cunning violent oppressor — me!
 Follow them to their fate and help your
 best,
 You Rome, Arezzo, foes called friends of
 me,
 They gave the good long laugh to, at my
 cost!
 Defray your share o' the cost, since you 60
 partook
 The entertainment! Do! — assured the
 while,
 That not one stab, I dealt to right and left,
 But went the deeper for a fancy — this —
 That each might do me two-fold service,
 find
 A friend's face at the bottom of each
 wound,
 And scratch its smirk a little!
 Panciatichi!
 There's a report at Florence, — is it true? —
 That when your relative the Cardinal
 Built, only the other day, that barrack-
 bulk,
 The palace in Via Larga, someone picked 70
 From out the street a saucy quip enough
 That fell there from its day's flight through
 the town,
 About the flat front and the windows wide
 And bulging heap of cornice, — hitched
 the joke
 Into a sonnet, signed his name thereto,
 And forthwith pinned on post the pleas-
 antry:
 For which he's at the galleys, rowing now
 Up to his waist in water, — just because
Panciatichi and *lymphatic* rhymed so pat!
 I hope, Sir, those who passed this joke on 80
 me
 Were not unduly punished? What say
 you,
 Prince of the Church, my patron? Nay,
 indeed,

- I shall not dare insult your wits so much
 As think this problem difficult to solve.
 This Pietro and Violante then, I say,
 These two ambiguous insects, changing
 name
 And nature with the season's warmth or
 chill, —
 Now, grovelled, grubbing toiling moiling
 ants,
 A very synonym of thrift and peace, —
 Anon, with lusty June to prick their heart,
 Soared i' the air, winged flies for more
 offence,
 10 Circed me, buzzed me deaf and stung me
 blind,
 And stunk me dead with fetor in the face
 Until I stopped the nuisance: there's my
 crime!
 Pity I did not suffer them subside
 Into some further shape and final form
 Of execrable life? My masters, no!
 I, by one blow, wisely cut short at once
 Them and their transformations of disgust,
 In the snug little Villa out of hand.
 "Grant me confession, give bare time for
 that!" —
 20 Shouted the sinner till his mouth was
 stopped.
 His life confessed! — that was enough for
 me,
 Who came to see that he did penance.
 'S death!
 Here's a coil raised, a pother and for what?
 Because strength, being provoked by
 weakness, fought
 And conquered, — the world never heard
 the like!
 Pah, how I spend my breath on them, as if
 'Twas their fate troubled me, too hard
 to range
 Among the right and fit and proper things!
- Ay, but Pompilia, — I await your word, —
 30 She, unimpeached of crime, unimplicate
 In folly, one of alien blood to these
 I punish, why extend my claim, exact
 Her portion of the penalty? Yes, friends,
 I go too fast: the orator's at fault:
 Yes, ere I lay her, with your leave, by them
 As she was laid at San Lorenzo late,
 I ought to step back, lead you by degrees,
 Recounting at each step some fresh offence,
 Up to the red bed, — never fear, I will!
 40 Gaze at her, where I place her, to begin,
 Confound me with her gentleness and
 worth!
 The horrible pair have fled and left her
 now,
 She has her husband for her sole concern:
 His wife, the woman fashioned for his help,
 Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, the
 bride
 To groom as is the Church and Spouse to
 Christ:
- There she stands in his presence: "Thy
 desire
 "Shall be to the husband, o'er thee shall
 he rule!"
 — "Pompilia, who declare that you love
 God,
 "You know who said that: then, desire my 50
 love,
 "Yield me contentment and be ruled
 aright!"
 She sits up, she lies down, she comes and
 goes,
 Kneels at the couch-side, overleans the
 sill
 O' the window, cold and pale and mute as
 stone,
 Strong as stone also. "Well, are they not
 fled?
 "Am I not left, am I not one for all?
 "Speak a word, drop a tear, detach a
 glance,
 "Bless me or curse me of your own accord!
 "Is it the ceiling only wants your soul,
 "Is worth your eyes?" And then the 60
 eyes descend,
 And do look at me. Is it at the meal?
 "Speak!" she obeys, "Be silent!" she
 obeys,
 Counting the minutes till I cry "Depart,"
 As brood-bird when you saunter past her
 eggs.
 Departs she? just the same through door
 and wall
 I see the same stone strength of white
 despair.
 And all this will be never otherwise!
 Before, the parents' presence lent her life:
 She could play off her sex's armoury,
 Entreat, reproach, be female to my male, 70
 Try all the shrieking doubles of the hare,
 Go clamour to the Commissary, bid
 The Archbishop hold my hands and stop
 my tongue,
 And yield fair sport so: but the tactics
 change,
 The hare stands stock-still to enrage the
 hound!
 Since that day when she learned she was no
 child
 Of those she thought her parents, — that
 their trick
 Had tricked me whom she thought sole
 trickster late, —
 Why, I suppose she said within herself
 "Then, no more struggle for my parents' 80
 sake!
 "And for my own sake, why needs strug-
 gle be?"
 But is there no third party to the pact?
 What of her husband's relish or dislike
 For this new game of giving up the game,
 This worst offence of not offending more?
 I'll not believe but instinct wrought in this
 Set her on to conceive and execute

The preferable plague: how sure they probe —

These jades, the sensitivest soft of man!
The long black hair was wound now in a wisp,

Crowned sorrow better than the wild web late:

No more soiled dress, 'tis trimness triumphs now,

For how should malice go with negligence?
The frayed silk looked the fresher for her spite!

There was an end to springing out of bed,
Praying me, with face buried on my feet,
10 Be hindered of my pastime, — so an end
To my rejoinder, "What, on the ground at last?

"Vanquished in fight, a suppliant for life?
"What if I raise you? 'Ware the casting down

"When next you fight me!" Then, she lay there, mine:

Now, mine she is if I please wring her neck, —

A moment of disquiet, working eyes,
Protruding tongue, a long sigh, then no more, —

As if one killed the horse one could not ride!

Had I enjoined "Cut off the hair!" — why, snap

20 The scissors, and at once a yard or so
Had fluttered in black serpents to the floor:
But till I did enjoin it, how she combs,
Uncurls and draws out to the complete length,

Plaits, places the insulting rope on head
To be an eyesore past dishevelment!
Is all done? Then sit still again and stare!

I advise — no one think to bear that look
Of steady wrong, endured as steadily
— Through what sustainment of deluding hope?

30 Who is the friend i' the background that notes all?

Who may come presently and close accounts?

This self-possession to the uttermost,
How does it differ in aught, save degree,
From the terrible patience of God?

"All which just means,
"She did not love you!" Again the word is launched

And the fact fronts me! What, you try the wards

With the true key and the dead lock flies open?

No, it sticks fast and leaves you fumbling still!

You have some fifty servants, Cardinal, —

40 Which of them loves you? Which subordinate

But makes parade of such officiousness

That, — if there's no love prompts it, — love, the sham,

Does twice the service done by love, the true?

God bless us liars, where's one touch of truth

In what we tell the world, or world tells us,
Of how we love each other? All the same,

We calculate on word and deed, nor err, —
Bid such a man do such a loving act,

Sure of effect and negligent of cause,
Just as we bid a horse, with cluck of tongue, 50

Stretch his legs arch-wise, crouch his saddled back

To foot-reach of the stirrup — all for love,
And some for memory of the smart of switch

On the inside of the foreleg — what care we?

Yet where's the bond obliges horse to man
Like that which binds fast wife to husband?

God Laid down the law: gave man the brawny arm

And ball of fist — woman the beardless cheek

And proper place to suffer in the side:
Since it is he can strike, let her obey! 60

Can she feel no love? Let her show the more,

Sham the worse, damn herself praise-worthily!

Who's that soprano, Rome went mad about
Last week while I lay rotting in my straw?

The very jailer gossiped in his praise —
How, — dressed up like Armida, though

a man;
And painted to look pretty, though a fright, —

He still made love so that the ladies swooned,

Being an eunuch. "Ah, Rinaldo mine!"

"But to breathe by thee while Jove slays 70 us both!"

All the poor bloodless creature never felt,
Si, do, re, mi, fa, squeak and squall — for what?

Two gold zecchines¹ the evening. Here's my slave,

Whose body and soul depend upon my nod,
Can't falter out the first note in the scale

For her life! Why blame me if I take the life?

All women cannot give men love, forsooth!
No, nor all pullets lay the henwife eggs —

Whereat she bids them remedy the fault,
Brood on a chalk-ball: soon the nest is 80 stocked —

Otherwise, to the plucking and the spit!
This wife of mine was of another mood —

¹ Zecchines: a gold coin worth about ten shillings.

- Would not begin the lie that ends with truth,
Nor feign the love that brings real love about:
Wherefore I judged, sentenced and punished her.
But why particularise, defend the deed?
Say that I hated her for no one cause
Beyond my pleasure so to do, — what then?
Just on as much incitement acts the world,
All of you! Look and like! You favour one,
Browbeat another, leave alone a third, —
10 Why should you master natural caprice?
Pure nature! Try: plant elm by ash in file;
Both unexceptionable trees enough,
They ought to overlean each other, pair
At top, and arch across the avenue
The whole path to the pleasaunce: do they so —
Or loathe, lie off abhorrent each from each?
Lay the fault elsewhere: since we must have faults,
Mine shall have been, — seeing there's ill in the end
Come of my course, — that I fare somehow worse
20 For the way I took: my fault . . . as God's my judge,
I see not where my fault lies, that's the truth!
I ought . . . oh, ought in my own interest
Have let the whole adventure go untried,
This chance by marriage: or else, trying
Ought to have turned it to account, some one
O' the hundred otherwises? Ay, my friend,
Easy to say, easy to do: step right
Now you've stepped left and stumbled on the thing,
— The red thing! Doubt I any more than you
30 That practice makes man perfect? Give again
The chance, — same marriage and no other wife,
Be sure I'll edify you! That's because
I'm practised, grown fit guide for Guido's self.
You proffered guidance, — I know, none so well, —
You laid down law and rolled decorum out,
From pulpit-corner on the gospel-side, —
Wanted to make your great experience mine,
Save me the personal search and pains so: thanks!
Take your word on life's use? When I take his —
- The muzzled ox that treadeth out the corn,
Gone blind in padding round and round one path, —
As to the taste of green grass in the field!
What do you know o' the world that's trodden flat
And salted sterile with your daily dung,
Leavened into a lump of loathsomeness?
Take your opinion of the modes of life,
The aims of life, life's triumph or defeat,
How to feel, how to scheme, and how to do
Or else leave undone? You preached long and loud
On high-days, "Take our doctrine upon 50 trust!
"Into the mill-house with you! Grind our corn,
"Relish our chaff, and let the green grass grow!"
I tried chaff, found I famished on such fare,
So made this mad rush at the mill-house door,
Buried my head up to the ears in dew,
Browsed on the best: for which you brain me, Sirs!
Be it so. I conceived of life that way,
And still declare — life, without absolute use
Of the actual sweet therein, is death, not life.
Give me, — pay down, — not promise, 60 which is air, —
Something that's out of life and better still,
Make sure reward, make certain punishment,
Entice me, scare me, — I'll forgo this life;
Otherwise, no! — the less that words, mere wind,
Would cheat me of some minutes while they plague,
Baulk fulness of revenge here, — blame yourselves
For this eruption of the pent-up soul
You prisoned first and played with afterward!
"Deny myself" meant simply pleasure you,
The sacred and superior, save the mark! 70 You, — whose stupidity and insolence
I must defer to, soothe at every turn, —
Whose swine-like snuffling greed and grunt-ing lust
I had to wink at or help gratify, —
While the same passions, — dared they perk in me,
Me, the immeasurably marked, by God,
Master of the whole world of such as you, —
I, boast such passions? 'Twas "Suppress them straight!
"Or stay, we'll pick and choose before destroy.
"Here's wrath in you, a serviceable 80 sword, —
"Beat it into a ploughshare! What's this long

- "Lance-like ambition? Forge a pruning-hook,
 "May be of service when our vines grow tall!
 "But—sword use swordwise, spear thrust out as spear?
 "Anathema! Suppression is the word!"
 My nature, when the outrage was too gross,
 Widened itself an outlet over-wide
 By way of answer, sought its own relief
 With more of fire and brimstone than you wished.
 All your own doing: preachers, blame yourselves!
- 0 'Tis I preach while the hour-glass runs and runs!
 God keep me patient! All I say just means—
 My wife proved, whether by her fault or mine,—
 That's immaterial,—a true stumbling-block
 I' the way of me her husband. I but plied
 The hatchet yourselves use to clear a path,
 Was politic, played the game you warrant wins,
 Plucked at law's robe a-rustle through the courts,
 Bowed down to kiss divinity's buckled shoe
 Cushioned i' the church: efforts all wide the aim!
- 20 Procedures to no purpose! Then flashed truth.
 The letter kills, the spirit keeps alive
 In law and gospel: there be nods and winks
 Instruct a wise man to assist himself
 In certain matters, nor seek aid at all.
 "Ask money of me,"—quoth the clownish saw,—
 "And take my purse! But,—speaking with respect,—
 "Need you a solace for the troubled nose?
 "Let everybody wipe his own himself!"
 Sirs, tell me free and fair! Had things gone well
- 30 At the wayside inn: had I surprised asleep
 The runaways, as was so probable,
 And pinned them each to other partridge-wise,
 Through back and breast to breast and back, then bade
 Bystanders witness if the spit, my sword,
 Were loaded with unlawful game for once—
 Would you have interposed to damp the glow
 Applauding me on every husband's cheek?
 Would you have checked the cry "A judgment, see!
 "A warning, note! Be henceforth chaste, ye wives,
 "Nor stray beyond your proper precinct, priests!"
 If you had, then your house against itself
- Divides, nor stands your kingdom any more.
 Oh why, why was it not ordained just so?
 Why fell not things out so nor otherwise?
 Ask that particular devil whose task it is
 To trip the all-but-at perfection,—slur
 The line of the painter just where paint leaves off
 And life begins,—put ice into the ode
 O' the poet while he cries "Next stanza—fire!"
- Inscribe all human effort with one word, 54
 Artistry's haunting curse, the Incomplete!
 Being incomplete, my act escaped success.
 Easy to blame now! Every fool can swear
 To hole in net that held and slipped the fish.
 But, treat my act with fair unjaundiced eye,
 What was there wanting to a masterpiece
 Except the luck that lies beyond a man?
 My way with the woman, now proved grossly wrong,
 Just missed of being gravely grandly right
 And making mouths laugh on the other 60
 side.
 Do, for the poor obstructed artist's sake,
 Go with him over that spoiled work once more!
 Take only its first flower, the ended act
 Now in the dusty pod, dry and defunct!
 I march to the Villa, and my men with me,
 That evening, and we reach the door and stand.
 I say . . . no, it shoots through me lightning-like
 While I pause, breathe, my hand upon the latch,
 "Let me forebode! Thus far, too much success:
 "I want the natural failure—find it where? 70
 "Which thread will have to break and leave a loop
 "I' the meshy combination, my brain's loom
 "Wove this long while, and now next minute tests?
 "Of three that are to catch, two should go free,
 "One must: all three surprised,—impossible!
 "Beside, I seek three and may chance on six,—
 "This neighbour, t'other gossip,—the babe's birth
 "Brings such to fireside, and folks give them wine,—
 "'Tis late: but when I break in presently
 "One will be found outlingering the rest 80
 "For promise of a posset,—one whose shout
 "Would raise the dead down in the catacombs,
 "Much more the city-watch that goes its round.

"When did I ever turn adroitly up
 "To sun some brick embedded in the soil,
 "And with one blow crush all three scor-
 pions there?
 "Or Pietro or Violante shambles off —
 "It cannot be but I surprise my wife —
 "If only she is stopped and stamped on,
 good!
 "That shall suffice: more is improbable.
 "Now I may knock!" And this once for
 my sake
 The impossible was effected: I called
 king,
 to Queen and knave in a sequence, and cards
 came,
 All three, three only! So, I had my way,
 Did my deed: so, unbrokenly lay bare
 Each tænia¹ that had sucked me dry of
 juice,
 At last outside me, not an inch of ring
 Left now to writhe about and root itself
 I' the heart all powerless for revenge!
 Henceforth
 I might thrive: these were drawn and dead
 and damned.
 Oh Cardinal, the deep long sigh you heave
 When the load's off you, ringing as it runs
 20 All the way down the serpent-stair to hell!
 No doubt the fine delirium flustered me,
 Turned my brain with the influx of success
 As if the sole need now were to wave wand
 And find doors fly wide, — wish and have
 my will, —
 The rest o' the scheme would care for
 itself: escape
 Easy enough were that, and poor beside!
 It all but proved so, — ought to quite have
 proved,
 Since, half the chances had sufficed, set
 free
 Anyone, with his senses at command,
 30 From thrice the danger of my flight.
 But, drunk,
 Redundantly triumphant, — some reverse
 Was sure to follow! There's no other way
 Accounts for such prompt perfect failure
 then
 And there on the instant. Any day o' the
 week,
 A ducat slid discreetly into palm
 O' the mute post-master, while you whisper
 him —
 How you the Count and certain four your
 knaves,
 Have just been mauling who was malapert,
 Suspect the kindred may prove trouble-
 some,
 40 Therefore, want horses in a hurry, — that
 And nothing more secures you any day
 The pick o' the stable! Yet I try the
 trick,
 Double the bribe, call myself Duke for
 Count,

¹ Tænia: a tape-worm.

And say the dead man only was a Jew,
 And for my pains find I am dealing just
 With the one scrupulous fellow in all
 Rome —
 Just this immaculate official stares,
 Sees I want hat on head and sword in
 sheath,
 Am splashed with other sort of wet than
 wine,
 Shrugs shoulder, puts my hand by, gold 50
 and all,
 Stands on the strictness of the rule o' the
 road!
 "Where's the Permission?" Where's the
 wretched rag
 With the due seal and sign of Rome's
 Police,
 To be had for asking, half-an-hour ago?
 "Gone? Get another, or no horses
 hence!"
 He dares not stop me, we five glare too
 grim,
 But hinders, — hacks and hamstrings sure
 enough,
 Gives me some twenty miles of miry road
 More to march in the middle of that night
 Whereof the rough beginning taxed the 60
 strength
 O' the youngsters, much more mine, both
 soul and flesh,
 Who had to think as well as act: dead-
 beat,
 We gave in ere we reached the boundary
 And safe spot out of this irrational Rome, —
 Where, on dismounting from our steeds
 next day,
 We had snapped our fingers at you, safe
 and sound,
 Tuscans once more in blessed Tuscany,
 Where laws make wise allowance, under-
 stand
 Civilised life and do its champions right!
 Witness the sentence of the Rota there, 70
 Arezzo uttered, the Granduke confirmed,
 One week before I acted on its hint, —
 Giving friend Guillichini, for his love,
 The galleys, and my wife your saint,
 Rome's saint, —
 Rome manufactures saints enough to know,
 Seclusion at the Stinche for her life.
 All this, that all but was, might all have
 been,
 Yet was not! balked by just a scrupulous
 knave
 Whose palm was horn through handling
 horses' hoofs
 And could not close upon my proffered 80
 gold!
 What say you to the spite of fortune?
 Well,
 The worst's in store: thus hindered, haled
 this way
 To Rome again by hangdogs, whom
 find I

- Here, still to fight with, but my pale frail wife?
 — Riddled with wounds by one not like to waste
 The blows he dealt, — knowing anatomy, —
 (I think I told you) bound to pick and choose
 The vital parts! 'Twas learning all in vain!
 She too must shimmer through the gloom o' the grave,
 Come and confront me — not at judgment-seat
 Where I could twist her soul, as erst her flesh,
 And turn her truth into a lie, — but there,
 O' the death-bed, with God's hand between us both,
 Striking me dumb, and helping her to speak,
 Tell her own story her own way, and turn My plausibility to nothingness!
 Four whole days did Pompilia keep alive,
 With the best surgery of Rome agape
 At the miracle, — this cut, the other slash,
 And yet the life refusing to dislodge,
 Four whole extravagant impossible days,
 Till she had time to finish and persuade
 Every man, every woman, every child
 In Rome, of what she would: the selfsame she
 Who, but a year ago, had wrung her hands,
 Reddened her eyes and beat her breasts, rehearsed,
 The whole game at Arezzo, nor availed
 Thereby to move one heart or raise one hand!
 When destiny intends you cards like these,
 What good of skill and preconcerted play?
 Had she been found dead, as I left her dead,
 I should have told a tale brooked no reply:
 You scarcely will suppose me found at fault
 With that advantage! "What brings me to Rome?"
 "Necessity to claim and take my wife:
 "Better, to claim and take my new-born babe, —
 "Strong in paternity a fortnight old,
 "When 'tis at strongest: warily I work,
 "Knowing the machinations of my foe;
 "I have companionship and use the night;
 "I seek my wife and child, — I find — no child
 "But wife in the embraces of that priest
 "Who caused her to elope from me.
 These two,
 "Backed by the pander-pair who watch the while,
 "Spring on me like so many tiger-cats,
 "Glad of the chance to end the intruder.
 I —
- "What should I do but stand on my defence,
 "Strike right, strike left, strike thick and threefold. slay,
 "Not all — because the coward priest escapes.
 "Last, I escape, in fear of evil tongues,
 "And having had my taste of Roman law."
 What's disputable, refutable here? —
 Save by just this one ghost-thing half on earth,
 Half out of it, — as if she held God's hand
 While she leant back and looked her last at me,
 Forgiving me (here monks begin to weep)
 Oh, from her very soul, commending mine
 To heavenly mercies which are infinite, —
 While fixing fast my head beneath your knife!
 'Tis fate not fortune. All is of a piece!
 When was it chance informed me of my youths?
 My rustic four o' the family, soft swains,
 What sweet surprise had they in store for me,
 Those of my very household, — what did Law
 Twist with her rack-and-cord-contrivance late
 From out their bones and marrow? What but this —
 Had no one of these several stumbling-blocks
 Stopped me, they yet were cherishing a scheme,
 All of their honest country homespun wit,
 To quietly next day at crow of cock
 Cut my own throat too, for their own behoof,
 Seeing I had forgot to clear accounts
 O' the instant, nowise slackened speed for that, —
 And somehow never might find memory,
 Once safe back in Arezzo, where things change,
 And a court-lord needs mind no country lout.
 Well, being the arch-offender, I die last, —
 May, ere my head falls, have my eyesight free,
 Nor miss them dangling high on either hand,
 Like scarecrows in a hemp-field, for their pains!
- And then my Trial, — 'tis my Trial that bites
 Like a corrosive, so the cards are packed,
 Dice loaded, and my life-stake tricked away!
 Look at my lawyers, lacked they grace of law,

- Latin or logic? Were not they fools to the height,
 Fools to the depth, fools to the level between,
 O' the foolishness set to decide the case?
 They feign, they flatter; nowise does it skill,
 Everything goes against me: deal each judgment
 His dole of flattery and feigning, — why,
 He turns and tries and snuts and savours it,
 As some old fly the sugar-grain, your gift;
 Then eyes your thumb and finger, brushes clean
- 10 The absurd old head of him, and whisks away,
 Leaving your thumb and finger dirty. Laugh!
 And finally, after this long-drawn range
 Of affront and failure, failure and affront; —
 This path, 'twixt crosses leading to a skull,
 Paced by me barefoot, bloodied by my palms
 From the entry to the end, — there's light at length,
 A cranny of escape: appeal may be
 To the old man, to the father, to the Pope,
 For a little life — from one whose life is spent,
- 20 A little pity — from pity's source and seat,
 A little indulgence to rank, privilege,
 From one who is the thing personified,
 Rank, privilege, indulgence, grown beyond
 Earth's bearing, even, ask Jansenius² else!
 Still the same answer, still no other tune
 From the cicala perched at the tree-top
 Than crickets noisy round the root: 'tis
 "Die!"
- Bids Law — "Be damned!" adds Gospel,
 — nay,
 No word so frank, — 'tis rather, "Save yourself!"
- 30 The Pope subjoins — "Confess and be absolved!
 "So shall my credit countervail your shame,
 "And the world see I have not lost the knack
 "Of trying all the spirits: yours, my son,
 "Wants but a fiery washing to emerge
 "In clarity! Come, cleanse you, ease the ache
 "Of these old bones, refresh our bowels, boy!"
- Do I mistake your mission from the Pope?
 Then, bear his Holiness the mind of me!
 I do get strength from being thrust to wall,
- Successfully wrenched from pillar and from post
 By this tenacious hate of fortune, hate
 Of all things in, under, and above earth
 Warfare; begun this mean unmanly mode,
 Does best to end so, — gives earth spectacle
 Of a brave fighter who succumbs to odds
 That turn defeat to victory. Stab, I fold
 My mantle round me! Rome approves my act:
 Applauds the blow which costs me life but keeps
 My honour spotless: Rome would praise no more
 Had I fallen, say, some fifteen years ago, 50
 Helping Vienna² when our Aretines
 Flocked to Duke Charles and fought Turk Mustafa;
 Nor would you two be trembling o'er my corpse
 With all this exquisite solicitude.
 Why is it that I make such suit to live?
 The popular sympathy that's round me now
 Would break like bubble that o'er-domes a fly:
 Solid enough while he lies quiet there,
 But let him want the air and ply the wing,
 Why, it breaks and bespatters him, what 60
 else?
- Cardinal, if the Pope had pardoned me,
 And I walked out of prison through the crowd,
 It would not be your arm I should dare press!
 Then, if I got safe to my place again,
 How sad and sapless were the years to come!
 I go my old ways and find things grown grey;
 You priests leer at me, old friends look askance,
 The mob's in love, I'll wager, to a man,
 With my poor young good beauteous murdered wife:
 For hearts require instruction how to beat, 70
 And eyes, on warrant of the story, wax
 Wanton at portraiture in white and black
 Of dead Pompilia gracing ballad-sheet,
 Which eyes, lived she unmurdered and unsung,
 Would never turn though she paced street as bare
 As the mad penitent ladies do in France.
 My brothers quietly would edge me out
 Of use and management of things called mine;

² *Helping Vienna*: Vienna was besieged in 1683 by the Turks under Mahomet IV., and relieved by John Sobieski. Kara Mustafa was the Turkish grand-vizier and general. Duke Charles of Lorraine commanded part of the relieving forces.

² *Jansenius*: Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638), from whom the Jansenists took their name; author of the work called *Augustinus*, condemned by several popes in succession.

- Do I command? "You stretched command before!"
- Show anger? "Anger little helped you once!"
- Advise? "How managed you affairs of old?"
- My very mother, all the while they gird,
Turns eye up, gives confirmatory groan;
For unsuccess, explain it how you will,
Disqualifies you, makes you doubt yourself,
— Much more, is found decisive by your friends.
- Beside, am I not fifty years of age?
- What new leap would a life take, checked like mine
- I' the spring at outset? Where's my second chance?
- Ay, but the babe . . . I had forgot my son,
My heir! Now for a burst of gratitude!
There's some appropriate service to intone,
Some *gaudeamus* and thanksgiving-psalm!
Old, I renew my youth in him, and poor
Possess a treasure, — is not that the phrase?
- Only I must wait patient twenty years —
Nourishing all the while, as father ought,
The excrescence with my daily blood of life.
Does it respond to hope, such sacrifice, —
Grows the wen plump while I myself grow lean?
- Why, here's my son and heir in evidence,
Who stronger, wiser, handsomer than I
By fifty years, relieves me of each load, —
Tames my hot horse, carries my heavy gun,
Courts my coy mistress, — has his apt advice
On house-economy, expenditure,
And what not. All which good gifts and great growth
- Because of my decline, he brings to bear
On Guido, but half apprehensive how
He cumbers earth, crosses the brisk young Count,
Who civilly would thrust him from the scene.
Contrariwise, does the blood-offering fail?
There's an ineptitude, one blank the more
Added to earth in semblance of my child?
Then, this has been a costly piece of work,
My life exchanged for his! — why he, not I,
- Enjoy the world, if no more grace accrue?
- Dwarf me, what giant have you made of him?
- I do not dread the disobedient son:
I know how to suppress rebellion there,
Being not quite the fool my father was.
But grant the medium measure of a man,
The usual compromise 'twixt fool and sage,
— You know — the tolerably-obstinate,
- The not-so-much-perverse but you may train,
The true son-servant that, when parent bids
"Go work, son, in my vineyard!" makes reply
"I go, Sir!" — Why, what profit in your son
Beyond the drudges you might subsidise,
Have the same work from, at a paul the head?
- Look at those four young precious olive-plants
Reared at Vittiano, — not on flesh and blood,
'These twenty years, but black bread and sour wine!
I bade them put forth tender branch, hook, hold,
And hurt three enemies I had in Rome:
They did my hest as unreluctantly,
At promise of a dollar, as a son
Adjured by mumping memories of the 60 past.
- No, nothing repays youth expended so —
Youth, I say, who am young still: grant but leave
To live my life out, to the last I'd live
And die conceding age no right of youth!
- It is the will runs the renewing nerve
Through flaccid flesh that faints before the time.
- Therefore no sort of use for son have I —
Sick, not of life's feast but of steps to climb
To the house where life prepares her feast,
— of means
- To the end: for make the end attainable
Without the means, — my relish were like yours.
- A man may have an appetite enough
For a whole dish of robins ready cooked,
And yet lack courage to face sleet, pad snow,
And snare sufficiently for supper.
- Thus
- The time's arrived when, ancient Roman-like,
I am bound to fall on my own sword: why not
Say — Tuscan-like, more ancient, better still?
Will you hear truth can do no harm nor good?
- I think I never was at any time
A Christian, as you nickname all the world,
Me among others: truce to nonsense now!
Name me, a primitive religionist —
As should the aboriginary be
I boast myself, Etruscan, Aretine

One sprung, — your frigid Virgil's fieriest word,¹ —

From fauns and nymphs, trunks and the heart of oak,

With, — for a visible divinity, —

The portent of a Jove Ægiochus

Descried 'mid clouds, lightning and thunder, couched

On topmost crag of your Capitoline:

'Tis in the Seventh Æneid, — what, the Eighth?

Right, — thanks, Abate, — though the Christian's dumb,

The Latinist's vivacious in you yet!

10 I know my grandsire had our tapestry
Marked with the motto, 'neath a certain shield,

Where to his grandson presently will give gules

To vary azure. First we fight for faiths,
But get to shake hands at the last of all:

Mine's your faith too, — in Jove Ægiochus!

Nor do Greek gods, that serve as supplement,

Jar with the simpler scheme, if understood.

We want such intermediary race

To make communication possible;

20 The real thing were too lofty, we too low,
Midway hang these: we feel their use so plain

In linking height to depth, that we doff hat
And put no question nor pry narrowly

Into the nature hid behind the names.

We grudge no rite the fancy may demand;
But never, more than needs, invent, refine,

Improve upon requirement, idly wise

Beyond the letter, teaching gods their trade,

Which is to teach us: we'll obey when taught.

30 Why should we do our duty past the need?
When the sky darkens, Jove is wroth, — say prayer!

When the sun shines and Jove is glad, — sing psalm!

But wherefore pass prescription and devise
Blood-offering for sweat-service, lend the rod

A pungency through pickle of our own?

Learned Abate, — no one teaches you

What Venus means and who's Apollo here!

I spare you, Cardinal — but, though you wince,

¹ *Virgil's fieriest word* Æneid VIII. 314.

315 —

"Haec nemora indigenæ Fauni Nymphæque tenebant,

Gensque virum truncis et duro robore nata."

The reference which follows is to ll. 351-353 of the same book.

You know me, I know you, and both know that!

So, if Apollo bids us fast, we fast,

40 But where does Venus order we stop sense
When Master Pietro² rhymes a pleasantry?

Give alms prescribed on Friday: but, hold hand

Because your foe lies prostrate, — where's the word

Explicit in the book debars revenge?

The rationale of your scheme is just

"Pay toll here, there pursue your pleasure free!"

So do you turn to use the medium-powers,
Mars and Minerva, Bacchus and the rest,

And so are saved propitiating — whom? 50
What all-good, all-wise and all-potent Jove

Vexed by the very sins in man, himself
Made life's necessity when man he made?

Irrational bunglers! So, the living truth
Revealed to strike Pan dead,³ ducks low at last,

Prays leave to hold its own and live good days

Provided it go masque grotesquely, called Christian not Pagan. Oh, you purged the sky

Of all gods save the One, the great and good,

Clapped hands and triumphed! But the 60
change came fast:

The inexorable need in man for life —
(Life, you may mulct and minish to a grain

Out of the lump, so that the grain but live)
Laughed at your substituting death for life,

And bade you do your worst: which worst was done

In just that age styled primitive and pure
When Saint this, Saint that, dutifully starved,

Froze, fought with beasts, was beaten and abused

And finally ridded of his flesh by fire,
He kept life-long unspotted from the 70
world!

Next age, how goes the game, what mortal gives

His life and emulates Saint that, Saint this?

Men mutter, make excuse or mutiny,
In fine are minded all to leave the new,

Stick to the old, — enjoy old liberty,
No prejudice in enjoyment, if you please,

To the new profession: sin o' the sly, henceforth!

² *Master Pietro*: Pietro Aretino. See note on p. 843, l. 16.

³ *Revealed to strike Pan dead*: an allusion to the legend that, at the hour of the Crucifixion, certain Greek sailors heard a voice proclaiming "Pan is dead."

The law stands though the letter kills:
what then?

The spirit saves as unmistakeably.

Omniscience sees, Omnipotence could
stop,

Omnibenevolence pardons: it must be,
Frown law its fiercest, there's a wink
somewhere!

Such was the logic in this head of mine:

I, like the rest, wrote "poison" on my
bread,

But broke and ate: — said "Those that
use the sword

"Shall perish by the same;" then stabbed
my foe.

ro I stand on solid earth, not empty air:

Dislodge me, let your Pope's crook hale
me hence!

Not he, nor you! And I so pity both,
I'll make the true charge you want wit to
make:

"Count Guido, who reveal our mystery,

"And trace all issues to the love of life:

"We having life to love and guard, like you,

"Why did you put us upon self-defence?

"You well knew what prompt pass-word
would appease

"The sentry's ire when folk infringed his
bounds,

20 "And yet kept mouth shut: do you wonder
then

"If, in mere decency, he shot you dead?

"He can't have people play such pranks
as yours

"Beneath his nose at noonday: you dis-
dained

"To give him an excuse before the world

"By crying 'I break rule to save our
camp!'

"Under the old rule, such offence were
death;

"And you had heard the Pontifex pro-
nounce

"Since you slay foe and violate the form,

"Slaying turns murder, which were sac-
rifice

30 "Had you, while, say, law-suiting foe to
death,

"But raised an altar to the Unknown God

"Or else the Genius of the Vatican.'

"Why then this pother? — all because the
Pope,

"Doing his duty, cried 'A foreigner,

"You scandalise the natives: here at
Rome

"*Romano vivitur more*:¹ wise men, here,

"Put the Church forward and efface
themselves.

"The fit defence had been, — you
stamped on wheat,

"Intending all the time to trample tares, —

"Were fain extirpate, then, the heretic, 4c

"You now find, in your haste was slain a
fool:

"Nor Pietro, nor Violante, nor your wife

"Meant to breed up your babe a Molinist!

"Whence you are duly contrite. Not one
word

"Of all this wisdom did you urge: which
slip

"Death must atone for."

So, let death atone!

So ends mistake, so end mistakers! — end
Perhaps to recommence, — how should I
know?

Only, be sure, no punishment, no pain

Childish, preposterous, impossible, 5a

But some such fate as Ovid could fore-
see, —

Byblis in fluvium,² let the weak soul end

In water, *sed Lycaon in lupum*, but

The strong become a wolf for evermore!

Change that Pomrilia to a puny stream

Fit to reflect the daisies on its bank!

Let me turn wolf, be whole, and sate, for
once, —

Wallow in what is now a wolfishness

Coerced too much by the humanity

That's half of me as well! Grow out of 6c
man,

Glut the wolf-nature, — what remains but
grow

Into the man again, be man indeed

And all man? Do I ring the changes
right?

Deformed, transformed, reformed, in-
formed, conformed!

The honest instinct, pent and crossed
through life,

Let surge by death into a visible flow

Of rapture: as the strangled thread of
flame

Painfully winds, annoying and annoyed,

Malignant and maligned, thro' stone and
ore,

Till earth exclude the stranger: vented 7a
once,

It finds full play, is recognised atop

Some mountain as no such abnormal birth,

Fire for the mount, not streamlet for the
vale!

Ay, of the water was that wife of mine —

Be it for good, be it for ill, no run

O' the red thread through that insignifi-
cance!

Again, how she is at me with those eyes!

Away with the empty stare! Be holy still,

And stupid ever! Occupy your patch

Of private snow that's somewhere in what 8a
world

¹ *Romano vivitur more*: "one does as Rome
does."

² *Byblis in fluvium . . . Lycaon in lupum*:
titles of transformations recorded in Ovid's
Metamorphoses.

- May now be growing icy round your head,
And aguish at your foot-print, — freeze not
me,
Dare follow not another step I take,
Not with so much as those detested eyes,
No, though they follow but to pray me
pause
On the incline, earth's edge that's next to
hell!
None of your abnegation of revenge!
Fly at me frank, tug while I tear again!
There's God, go tell Him, testify your
worst!
- Not she! There was no touch in her of
hate:
And it would prove her hell, if I reached
mine!
To know I suffered, would still sadden her
Do what the angels might to make amends!
Therefore there's either no such place as
hell,
Or thence shall I be thrust forth, for her
sake,
And thereby undergo three hells, not one —
I who, with outlet for escape to heaven,
Would tarry if such flight allowed my foe
To raise his head, relieved of that firm
foot
- 20 Had pinned him to the fiery pavement
else!
So am I made, "who did not make
myself."
(How dared she rob my own lip of the
word?)
Beware me in what other world may be! —
Pompilia, who have brought me to this
pass!
All I know here, will I say there, and go
Beyond the saying with the deed. Some
use
There cannot but be for a mood like mine,
Implacable, persistent in revenge.
She maundered "All is over and at end:
- 30 "I go my own road, go you where God
will!
"Forgive you? I forget you!" There's
the saint
That takes your taste, you other kind of
men!
How you had loved her! Guido wanted
skill
To value such a woman at her worth!
Properly the instructed criticise
"What's here, you simpleton have tossed
to take
"Its chance i' the gutter? This a daub,
indeed?
"Why, 'tis a Rafael that you kicked to
rags!"
Perhaps so: some prefer the pure design:
- 40 Give me my gorge of colour, glut of gold
In a glory round the Virgin made for me!
Titian's the man, not Monk Angelico
Who traces you some timid chalky ghce
- That turns the church into a chancel: ay,
Just such a pencil might depict my wife!
She, — since she, also, would not change
herself, —
Why could not she come in some heart-
shaped cloud,
Rainbowed about with riches, royalty
Rimming her round, as round the tintless
lawn
Guardingly runs the selvage cloth of gold? 5
I would have left the faint fine gauze un-
touched,
Needle-worked over with its lily and rose,
Let her bleach unmolested in the midst,
Chill that selected solitary spot
Of quietude she pleased to think was life.
Purity, pallor grace the lawn no doubt
When there's the costly bordure to un-
thread
And make again an ingot: but what's
grace
When you want meat and drink and clothes
and fire?
A tale comes to my mind that's apposite — 6
Possibly true, probably false, a truth
Such as all truths we live by, Cardinal!
'Tis said, a certain ancestor of mine
Followed — whoever was the potentate,
To Paynimrie, and in some battle, broke
Through more than due allowance of the
foe,
And, risking much his own life, saved the
lord's.
Battered and bruised, the Emperor scram-
bles up,
Rubs his eyes and looks round and sees my
sire,
Picks a furze-sprig from out his hauberk- 7
joint,
(Token how near the ground went maj-
esty)
And says "Take this, and if thou get safe
home,
"Plant the same in thy garden-ground to
grow:
"Run thence an hour in a straight line,
and stop:
"Describe a circle round (for central point)
"The furze aforesaid, reaching every way
"The length of that hour's run: I give it
thee, —
"The central point, to build a castle
there,
"The space circumjacent, for fit demesne,
"The whole to be thy children's heritage, — 8
"Whom, for thy sake, bid thou wear furze
on cap!"
Those are my arms: we turned the furze
a tree
To show more, and the greyhound tied
thereto,
Straining to start, means swift and
greedy both;
He stands upon a triple mount of gold —

By Jove, then, he's escaping from true gold
 And trying to arrive at empty air!
 Aha! the fancy never crossed my mind!
 My father used to tell me, and subjoin
 "As for the castle, that took wings and flew,
 "The broad lands, — why, to traverse them to-day
 "Scarce tasks my gouty feet, and in my prime
 "I doubt not I could stand and spit so far:
 "But for the furze, boy, fear no lack of that,
 "So long as fortune leaves one field to grub!
 "Wherefore, hurra for furze and loyalty!"
 What may I mean, where may the lesson lurk?
 "Do not bestow on man, by way of gift,
 "Furze without land for framework, — vaunt no grace
 "Of purity, no furze-sprig of a wife,
 "To me, i' the thick of battle for my bread,
 "Without some better dowry, — gold will do!"
 No better gift than sordid muck? Yes, Sirs!
 Many more gifts much better. Give them me!
 O those Olimpias bold, those Biancas brave,
 That brought a husband power worth Ormuz' wealth!
 Cried "Thou being mine, why, what but thine am I?
 "Be thou to me law, right, wrong, heaven and hell!
 "Let us blend souls, blent, thou in me, to bid
 "Two bodies work one pleasure! What are these
 "Called king, priest, father, mother, stranger, friend?
 "They fret thee or they frustrate? Give the word —
 "Be certain they shall frustrate nothing more!
 "And who is this young florid foolishness
 "That holds thy fortune in his pigmy clutch,
 "— Being a prince and potency, forsooth! —
 "He hesitates to let the trifle go?
 "Let me but seal up eye, sing ear to sleep
 "Sounder than Samson, — pounce thou on the prize
 "Shall slip from off my breast, and down couch-side,
 "And on to floor, and far as my lord's feet —
 "Where he stands in the shadow with the knife,
 "Waiting to see what Delilah dares do!

"Is the youth fair? What is a man to me
 "Who am thy call-bird? Twist his neck 40
 — my dupe's, —
 "Then take the breast shall turn a breast indeed!"
 Such women are there; and they marry whom?
 Why, when a man has gone and hanged himself
 Because of what he calls a wicked wife, —
 See, if the very turpitude bemoaned
 Prove not mere excellence the fool ignores!
 His monster is perfection, — Circe, sent
 Straight from the sun, with wand the idiot blames
 As not an honest distaff to spin wool!
 O thou Lucrezia,¹ is it long to wait 50
 Yonder where all the gloom is in a glow
 With thy suspected presence? — virgin yet,
 Virtuous again, in face of what's to teach —
 Sin unimagined, unimaginable, —
 I come to claim my bride, — thy Borgia's self
 Not half the burning bridegroom I shall be!
 Cardinal, take away your crucifix!
 Abate, leave my lips alone, — they bite!
 Vainly you try to change what should not change,
 And shall not. I have bared, you bathe 60
 my heart —
 It grows the stonier for your saving dew!
 You steep the substance, you would lubricate,
 In waters that but touch to petrify!
 You too are petrifications of a kind:
 Move not a muscle that shows mercy.
 Rave
 Another twelve hours, every word were waste!
 I thought you would not slay impenitence,
 But teased, from men you slew, contrition first, —
 I thought you had a conscience. Cardinal,
 You know I am wronged! — wronged, say, 70
 and wronged, maintain.
 Was this strict inquisition made for blood
 When first you showed us scarlet on your back,
 Called to the College? Your straightforward way
 To your legitimate end, — I think it passed
 Over a scantling of heads brained, hearts broke,
 Lives trodden into dust! How otherwise?
 Such was the way o' the world, and so you walked.

¹ *Lucrezia*: Lucrezia Borgia.

Does memory haunt your pillow? Not a whit.
 God wills you never pace your garden-path,
 One appetising hour ere dinner-time,
 But your intrusion there treads out of life
 A universe of happy innocent things:
 Feel you remorse about that damsel-fly
 Which buzzed so near your mouth and
 Flapped your face?
 You blotted it from being at a blow:
 It was a fly, you were a man, and more,
 10 Lord of created things, so took your
 course.
 Manliness, mind, — these are things fit
 to save,
 Fit to brush fly from: why, because I take
 My course, must needs the Pope kill me?
 — kill you!
 You! for this instrument, he throws away,
 Is strong to serve a master, and were yours
 To have and hold and get much good
 from out!
 The Pope who dooms me needs must die
 next year;
 I'll tell you how the chances are supposed
 For his successor: first the Chamberlain,
 20 Old San Cesario, — Colloredo, next, —
 Then, one, two, three, four, I refuse to
 name;
 After these, comes Altieri; then come
 you —
 Seventh on the list you come, unless . . .
 ha, ha,
 How can a dead hand give a friend a
 lift?
 Are you the person to despise the help
 O' the head shall drop in pannier presently?
 So a child seesaws on or kicks away
 The fulcrum-stone that's all the sage
 requires
 To fit his lever to and move the world.
 30 Cardinal, I adjure you in God's name,
 Save my life, fall at the Pope's feet, set
 forth
 Things your own fashion, not in words like
 these
 Made for a sense like yours who apprehend!
 Translate into the Court-conventional
 "Count Guido must not die, is innocent!
 "Fair, be assured! But what an he were
 foul,
 "Blood-drenched and murder-crust head
 to foot?
 "Spare one whose death insults the Em-
 peror,
 "Nay, outrages the Louis you so love!
 40 "He has friends who will avenge him;
 enemies
 "Who will hate God now with impunity,
 "Missing the old coercive: would you
 send
 "A soul straight to perdition, dying frank

"An atheist?" Go and say this, for
 God's sake!
 — Why, you don't think I hope you'll say
 one word?
 Neither shall I persuade you from your
 stand
 Nor you persuade me from my station:
 take
 Your crucifix away, I tell you twice!
 Come, I am tired of silence! Pause
 enough!
 You have prayed: I have gone inside my 50
 soul
 And shut its door behind me: 'tis your
 torch
 Makes the place dark: the darkness let
 alone
 Grows tolerable twilight: one may grope
 And get to guess at length and breadth
 and depth.
 What is this fact I feel persuaded of —
 This something like a foothold in the sea,
 Although Saint Peter's bark scuds,
 billow-borne,
 Leaves me to founder where it flung me
 first?
 Spite of your splashing, I am high and
 dry!
 God takes his own part in each thing He 60
 made;
 Made for a reason, He conserves his work,
 Gives each its proper instinct of defence.
 My lamblike wife could neither bark nor
 bite,
 She bleated, bleated, till for pity pure
 The village roused up, ran with pole and
 prong
 To the rescue, and behold the wolf's at
 bay!
 Shall he try bleating? — or take turn or
 two,
 Since the wolf owns some kinship with the
 fox,
 And, failing to escape the foe by craft,
 Give up attempt, die fighting quietly? 70
 The last bad blow that strikes fire in at eye
 And on to brain, and so out, life and all,
 How can it but be cheated of a pang
 If, fighting quietly, the jaws enjoy
 One re-embrace in mid back-bone they
 break,
 After their weary work thro' the foe's
 flesh?
 That's the wolf-nature. Don't mistake
 my trope!
 A Cardinal so qualmish? Eminence,
 My fight is figurative, blows i' the air,
 Brain-war with powers and principalities, 80
 Spirit-bravado, no real fisticuffs!
 I shall not presently, when the knock
 comes,
 Cling to this bench nor claw the hang
 man's face,

No, trust me! I conceive worse lots than mine.
 Whether it be, the old contagious fit
 And plague o' the prison have surprised me too,
 The appropriate drunkenness of the death-hour
 Crept on my sense, kind work o' the wine and myrrh, —
 I know not, — I begin to taste my strength,
 Careless, gay even. What's the worth of life?
 The Pope's dead now, my murderous old man,
 For Tozzi told me so: and you, forsooth —
 Why, you don't think, Abate, do your best,
 You'll live a year more with that hacking cough
 And blotch of crimson where the cheek's a pit?
 Tozzi has got you also down in book!
 Cardinal, only seventh of seventy near,
 Is not one called Albano¹ in the lot?
 Go eat your heart, you'll never be a Pope!
 Inform me, is it true you left your love,
 A Pucci, for promotion in the church?
 She's more than in the church, — in the churchyard!
 20 Plautilla Pucci, your affianced bride,
 Has dust now in the eyes that held the love, —
 And Martinez, suppose they make you Pope,
 Stops that with *veto*, — so, enjoy yourself!
 I see you all reel to the rock, you waves —
 Some forthright, some describe a sinuous, track,
 Some, crested brilliantly, with heads above,
 Some in a strangled swirl sunk who knows how,
 But all bound whither the main-current sets,
 Rockward, an end in foam for all of you!
 30 What if I be o'ertaken, pushed to the front
 By all you crowding smoother souls behind,
 And reach, a minute sooner than was meant,
 The boundary whereon I break to mist?
 Go to! the smoothest safest of you all,
 Most perfect and compact wave in my train,
 Spite of the blue tranquillity above,
 Spite of the breadth before of lapsing peace,
 Where broods the halcyon and the fish leaps free,
 Will presently begin to feel the prick
 40 At lazy heart, the push at torpid brain,
 Will rock vertiginously in turn, and reel,
 And, emulative, rush to death like me.

Later or sooner by a minute then,
 So much for the untimeliness of death!
 And, as regards the manner that offends,
 The rude and rough, I count the same for gain.
 Be the act harsh and quick! Undoubtedly
 The soul's condensed and, twice itself, expands
 To burst thro' life, by alternation due,
 Into the other state whate'er it prove. 50
 You never know what life means till you die:
 Even throughout life, 'tis death that makes life live,
 Gives it whatever the significance.
 For see, on your own ground and argument,
 Suppose life had no death to fear, how find
 A possibility of nobleness
 In man, prevented daring any more?
 What's love, what's faith without a worst to dread?
 Lack-lustre jewelry! but faith and love
 With death behind them bidding do or 60
 die —
 Put such a foil at back, the sparkle's born!
 From out myself how the strange colours come!
 Is there a new rule in another world?
 Be sure I shall resign myself: as here
 I recognised no law I could not see,
 There, what I see, I shall acknowledge too:
 On earth I never took the Pope for God,
 In heaven I shall scarce take God for the Pope.
 Unmanned, remanned: I hold it probable —
 With something changeless at the heart of 70
 me
 To know me by, some nucleus that's myself:
 Accretions did it wrong? Away with them —
 You soon shall see the use of fire!

Till when,

All that was, is; and must for ever be.
 Nor is it in me to unhate my hates, —
 I use up my last strength to strike once more
 Old Pietro in the wine-house-gossip-face,
 To trample underfoot the whine and wile
 Of beast Violante, — and I grow one gorge
 To loathingly reject Pompilia's pate 80
 Poison my hasty hunger took for food.
 A strong tree wants no wreaths about its trunk,
 No cloying cups, no sickly sweet of scent,
 But sustenance at root, a bucketful.

¹ One called Albano: the next pope was Giovanni Francisco Albani.

How else lived that Athenian¹ who died so
Drinking hot bull's blood, fit for men like
me?
I lived and died a man, and take man's
chance,
Honest and bold: right will be done to
such.

Who are these you have let descend my
stair?

Ha, their accursed psalm! Lights at the
sill!

Is it "Open" they dare bid you? Treach-
ery!

Sirs, have I spoken one word all this while
Out of the world of words I had to say?

10 Not one word! All was folly — I laughed
and mocked!

Sirs, my first true word, all truth and no
lie,

Is — save me notwithstanding! Life is
all!

I was just stark mad, — let the madman
live

Pressed by as many chains as you please
pile!

Don't open! Hold me from them! I am
yours,

I am the Granduke's — no, I am the
Pope's!

Abate, — Cardinal, — Christ, — Maria,
— God, . . .

Pompilia, will you let them murder me?

XII.—THE BOOK AND THE RING.

HERE were the end, had anything an end:
20 Thus, lit and launched, up and up roared
and soared

A rocket, till the key o' the vault was
reached,

And wide heaven held, a breathless minute-
space,

In brilliant usurpature: thus caught
spark,

Rushed to the height, and hung at full of
fame

Over men's upturned faces, ghastly thence,
Our glaring Guido: now decline must be.

In its explosion, you have seen his act,
By my power — may-be, judged it by
your own, —

Or composite as good orbs prove, or
crammed

30 With worse ingredients than the Worm-
wood Star.²

The act, over and ended, falls and fades:

¹ That Athenian: Themistocles, who was
said to have killed himself by drinking bull's
blood, which the ancients believed to be a
poison.

² The Wormwood Star: Rev. viii. 11.

What was once seen, grows what is: now
described,

Then talked of, told about, a tinge the less
In every fresh transmission; till it melts,
Trickles in silent orange or wan grey
Across our memory, dies and leaves all
dark,

And presently we find the stars again.

Follow the main streaks, meditate the
mode

Of brightness, how it hastes to blend with
black!

After that February Twenty Two, 40
Since our salvation, Sixteen Ninety Eight,
Of all reports that were, or may have been,
Concerning those the day killed or let
live,

Four I count only. Take the first that
comes.

A letter from a stranger, man of rank,
Venetian visitor at Rome, — who knows,
On what pretence of busy idleness?

Thus he begins on evening of that day.

"Here are we at our end of Carnival;

"Prodigious gaiety and monstrous mirth, 50

"And constant shift of entertaining show:

"With influx, from each quarter of the
globe,

"Of strangers nowise wishful to be last

"I' the struggle for a good place presently

"When that befalls fate cannot long defer.

"The old Pope totters on the verge o' the
grave:

"You see, Malpichi understood far more

"Than Tozzi how to treat the ailments:
age,

"No question, renders these inveterate.

"Cardinal Spada, actual Minister, 60

"Is possible Pope; I wager on his head,

"Since those four entertainments of his
niece

"Which set all Rome a-stare: Pope prob-
ably —

"Though Colloredo has his backers too,
"And San Cesario makes one doubt at
times:

"Altieri will be Chamberlain at most.

"A week ago the sun was warm like May,

"And the old man took daily exercise

"Along the river-side; he loves to see

"That Custom-house he built upon the 70
bank,

"For, Naples born, his tastes are maritime:

"But yesterday he had to keep in-doors

"Because of the outrageous rain that fell.

"On such days the good soul has fainting-
fits,

"Or lies in stupor, scarcely makes believe
"Of minding business, fumbles at his
beads.

- "They say, the trust that keeps his heart alive
 "Is that, by lasting till December next,
 "He may hold Jubilee a second time,
 "And, twice in one reign, ope the Holy Doors.
 "By the way, somebody responsible
 "Assures me that the King of France has writ
 "Fresh orders: Fénelon will be condemned:¹
 "The Cardinal makes a wry face enough,
 "Having a love for the delinquent: still,
 "He's the ambassador, must press the point.
 "Have you a wager too, dependent here?
 "Now, from such matters to divert awhile,
 "Hear of to-day's event which crowns the week,
 "Casts all the other wagers into shade.
 "Tell Dandolo I owe him fifty drops
 "Of heart's blood in the shape of gold zechines!
 "The Pope has done his worst: I have to pay
 "For the execution of the Count, by Jove!
 "Two days since, I reported him as safe,
 "Re-echoing the conviction of all Rome:
 "Who could suspect its one deaf ear — the Pope's?
 "But prejudices grow insuperable,
 "And that old enmity to Austria, that
 "Passion for France and France's pageant-king
 "(Of which, why pause to multiply the proofs
 "Now scandalously rife in Europe's mouth?)
 "These fairly got the better in our man
 "Of justice, prudence, and *esprit de corps*,
 "And he persisted in the butchery.
 "Also, 'tis said that in his latest walk
 "To that Dogana-by-the-Bank he built,
 "The crowd, — he suffers question, unrebuked,
 "Asked, 'Whether murder was a privilege
 "Only reserved for nobles like the Count?'
 "And he was ever mindful of the mob.
 "Martinez, the Cæsarian Minister,
 "— Who used his best endeavours to spare blood,
 "And strongly pleaded for the life 'of one,'
 "Urged he, 'I may have dined at table with!' —
 "He will not soon forget the Pope's rebuff,
 "— Feels the slight sensibly, I promise you!
- ¹ Fénelon will be condemned: Fénelon's *Explication des Maximes des Saints* was condemned by Pope Innocent in 1699 for its advocacy of Quietism.
- "And but for the dissuasion of two eyes
 "That make with him foul weather or fine day,
 "He had abstained, nor graced the spectacle:
 "As it was, barely would he condescend
 "Look forth from the *palchetto*² where he sat
 "Under the Pincian: we shall hear of this.
 "The substituting, too, the People's Square
 "For the out-o'-the-way old quarter by the Bridge,
 "Was meant as a conciliatory sop
 "To the mob; it gave one holiday the more.
 "But the French Embassy might unfurl flag, —
 "Still the good luck of France to fling a foe!
 "Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly.
 "*Palchetti* were erected in the Place,
 "And houses, at the edge of the Three Streets,
 "Let their front windows at six dollars each:
 "Anguisciola, that patron of the arts,
 "Hired one; our Envoy Contarini too.
 "Now for the thing; no sooner the decree
 "Gone forth, — 'tis four-and-twenty hours ago, —
 "Than Acciaiuoli and Panciatichi,
 "Old friends, indeed compatriots of the man,
 "Being pitched on as the couple properest
 "To intimate the sentence yesternight,
 "Were closeted ere cock-crow with the Count.
 "They both report their efforts to dispose
 "The unhappy nobleman for ending well,
 "Despite the natural sense of injury,
 "Were crowned at last with a complete
 "And when the Company of Death arrived
 "At twenty-hours, — the way they reckon here, —
 "We say, at sunset, after dinner-time, —
 "The Count was led down, hoisted up on car,
 "Last of the five, as heinous, you know:
 "Yet they allowed one whole car to each man.
 "His intrepidity, nay, nonchalance,
 "As up he stood and down he sat himself,
 "Struck admiration into those who saw.
 "Then the procession started, took the way
 "From the New Prisons by the Pilgrim's Street,

² *Palchetto*: stage or scaffold.

- "The street of the Governo, Pasquin's Street,
 "(Where was stuck up, 'mid other epi-grams,
 "A quatrain . . . but of all that, presently!)
 "The Place Navona, the Pantheon's Place,
 "Place of the Column, last the Corso's length,
 "And so debouched thence at Mannaia's foot
 "I the Place o' the People. As is evident,
 "(Despite the malice, — plainly meant, I fear,
 "By this abrupt change of locality, —
 10 "The Square's no such bad place to head and hang)
 "We had the titillation as we sat
 "Assembled, (quality in conclave, ha?)
 "Of, minute after minute, some report
 "How the slow show was winding on its way.
 "Now did a car run over, kill a man,
 "Just opposite a pork-shop numbered Twelve:
 "And bitter were the outcries of the mob
 "Against the Pope: for, but that he forbids
 "The Lottery, why, Twelve were Tern Quatern!
 20 "Now did a beggar by Saint Agnes, lame
 "From his youth up, recover use of leg.
 "Through prayer of Guido as he glanced that way:
 "So that the crowd near crammed his hat with coin.
 "Thus was kept up excitement to the last,
 "— Not an abrupt out-bolting, as of yore,
 "From Castle, over Bridge and on to block,
 "And so all ended ere you well could wink!
 "To mount the scaffold-steps, Guido was last
 "Here also, as atrociouslest in crime.
 30 "We hardly noticed how the peasants died.
 "They dangled somehow soon to right and left,
 "And we remained all ears and eyes, could give
 "Ourselves to Guido undividedly,
 "As he harangued the multitude beneath.
 "He begged forgiveness on the part of God,
 "And fair construction of his act from men,
 "Whose suffrage he entreated for his soul,
 "Suggesting that we should forthwith repeat
- "A *Pater* and an *Ave*, with the hymn
 "*Salve Regina Celi*, for his sake.
 "Which said, he turned to the confessor, crossed
 "And reconciled himself, with decency,
 "Oft glancing at St. Mary's opposite,
 "Where they possess, and showed in shrine to-day,
 "The blessed *Umbilicus* of our Lord,
 "(A relic 'tis believed no other church
 "In Rome can boast of) — then rose up, as brisk
 "Knelt down again, bent head, adapted neck,
 "And, with the name of Jesus on his lips,
 "Received the fatal blow.
 "The headsman showed
 "The head to the populace. Must I avouch
 "We strangers own to disappointment here?
 "Report pronounced him fully six feet high,
 "Youngish, considering his fifty years.
 "And, if not handsome, dignified at least.
 "Indeed, it was no face to please a wife!
 "His friends say, this was caused by the costume:
 "He wore the dress he did the murder in.
 "That is, a *just-a-corps* of russet serge.
 "Black camisole, coarse cloak of baracan 6
 "(So they style here the garb of goat's-hair cloth)
 "White hat and cotton cap beneath, poor Count,
 "Preservative against the evening dews
 "During the journey from Arezzo. Well,
 "So died the man, and so his end was peace:
 "Whence many a moral were to meditate.
 "Spada, — you may bet Dandolo, — is Pope!
 "Now for the quatrain!"
-
- No, friend, this will do!
 You've sputtered into sparks. What streak comes next?
 A letter — Don Giacinto Arcangeli,
 Doctor and Doctor, him I made you mark
 Buckle to business in his study late,
 The virtuous sire, the valiant for the truth,
 Acquaints his correspondent, — Florentine,
 By name Cencini, advocate as well,
Socius and brother-in-the-devil-to-match, —
 A friend of Franceschini, anyhow,
 And knit up with the bowels of the case, —
 Acquaints him, (in this paper that I touch)
 How their joint effort to obtain reprieve &
 For Guido had so nearly nicked the nine

And ninety and one over, — folk would
 At Tarocs, — or succeeded, — in our
 phrase.
 To this Cencini's care I owe the Book,
 The yellow thing I take and toss once
 more, —
 How will it be, my four-years'-intimate,
 When thou and I part company anon? —
 'Twas he, the "whole position of the case,"
 Pleading and summary, were put before;
 Discreetly in my Book he bound them all,
 Adding some three epistles to the point.
 Here is the first of these, part fresh as
 penned,
 The sand, that dried the ink, not rubbed
 away,
 Though penned the day whereof it tells the
 deed:
 Part — extant just as plainly, you know
 where,
 Whence came the other stuff, went, you
 know how,
 To make the Ring that's all but round and
 done.

"Late they arrived, too late, egregious Sir,
 "Those same justificative points you urge
 "Might benefit His Blessed Memory
 "Count Guido Franceschini now, with
 God:
 "Since the Court, — to state things suc-
 cinctly, — styled
 "The Congregation of the Governor,
 "Having resolved on Tuesday last our
 cause
 "I' the guilty sense, with death for punish-
 ment,
 "Spite of all pleas by me deducible
 "In favour of said Blessed Memory, —
 "I, with expenditure of pains enough,
 "Obtained a respite, leave to claim and
 prove
 "Exemption from the law's award, — al-
 leged
 "The power and privilege o' the Clericate:
 "To which effect a courier was dis-
 patched.
 "But ere an answer from Arezzo came,
 "The Holiness of our Lord the Pope (pre-
 pare!)
 "Judging it inexpedient to postpone
 "The execution of such sentence passed,
 "Saw fit, by his particular cheirograph,
 "To derogate, dispense with privilege,
 "And wink at any hurt accruing thence
 "To Mother Church through damage of
 her son:
 "Also, to overpass and set aside
 "That other plea on score of tender age,
 "Put forth by me to do Pasquini good,
 "One of the four in trouble with our
 friend.

"So that all five, to-day, have suffered
 death
 "With no distinction save in dying, — he,
 "Decollate by mere due of privilege,
 "The rest hanged decently and in order.
 Thus
 "Came the Count to his end of gallant
 man,
 "Defunct in faith and exemplarity:
 "Nor shall the shield of his great House 56
 lose shine
 "Thereby, nor its blue banner blush to
 red.
 "This, too, should yield sustainment to
 our hearts —
 "He had commiseration and respect
 "In his decease from universal Rome,
 "*Quantum est hominum venustiorum*,
 "The nice and cultivated everywhere:
 "Though, in respect of me his advocate,
 "Needs must I groan o'er my debility,
 "Attribute the untoward event o' the
 strife
 "To nothing but my own crass ignorance 60
 "Which failed to set the valid reasons
 forth,
 "Find fit excuse: such is the fate of war!
 "May God compensate us the direful blow
 "By future blessings on his family,
 "Whereof I lowly beg the next commands;
 " — Whereto, as humbly, I confirm my-
 self . . ."

And so forth, — follow name and place
 and date.

On next leaf —

"Hadenus senioribus!

"There, old fox, show the clients t'other
 side
 "And keep this corner sacred, I beseech! 70
 "You and your pleas and proofs were what
 folk call
 "Pisan assistance, aid that comes too late,
 "Saves a man dead as nail in post of door.
 "Had I but time and space for narrative!
 "What was the good of twenty Clericates
 "When Somebody's thick headpiece once
 was bent
 "On seeing Guido's drop into the bag?
 "How these old men like giving youth a
 push!
 "So much the better: next push goes to
 him,
 "And a new Pope begins the century. 80
 "Much good I get by my superb defence!
 "But argument is solid and subsists,
 "While obstinacy and ineptitude
 "Accompany the owner to his tomb —
 "What do I care how soon? Beside, folk
 see!
 "Rome will have relished heartily the
 show,

"Quantum est, &c.: "all the world of culti-
 vated men," — from Catullus, 3, 2.

- "Yet understood the motives, never fear,
 "Which caused the indecent change o' the
 People's Place
 "To the People's Playground, — stigma-
 tise the spite
 "Which in a trice precipitated things!
 "As oft the moribund will give a kick
 "To show they are not absolutely dead,
 "So feebleness i' the socket shoots its last,
 "A spirt of violence for energy!
- ro "But thou, Cencini, brother of my breast,
 "O fox whose home is 'mid the tender
 grape,
 "Whose couch in Tuscany by Themis'
 throne,
 "Subject to no such . . . best I shut my
 mouth
 "Or only open it again to say,
 "This pother and confusion fairly laid,
 "My hands are empty and my satchel
 link.
 "Now then for both the Matrimonial
 Cause
 "And the Case of Gomez! Serve them
 hot and hot!
- "*Reliqua differamus in crastinum!*¹
 "The impatient estafette cracks whip out-
 side:
 20 "Still, though the earth should swallow
 him who swears
 "And me who make the mischief, in must
 slip —
 "My boy, your godson, fat-chaps Hy-
 acinth,
 "Enjoyed the sight while Papa plodded
 here.
 "I promised him, the rogue, a month ago,
 "The day his birthday was, of all the days,
 "That if I failed to save Count Guido's
 head,
 "Cinuccio should at least go see it chopped
 "From trunk — 'So, latinise your thanks!'
 quoth I.
 "That I prefer, *hoc malim*,' raps me out
 30 "The rogue: you notice the subjunctive?
 Ah!
 "Accordingly he sat there, bold in box,
 "Proud as the Pope behind the peacock-
 fans:
 "Whereon a certain lady-patroness
 "For whom I manage things (my boy in
 front,
 "Her Marquis sat the third in evidence;
 "Boys have no eyes nor ears save for the
 show)
 "This time, Cintino,' was her sportive
 word,
 "When whiz and thump went axe and
 mowed lay man,
- "And folk could fall to the suspended
 chat,
 "This time, you see, Bottini rules the
 roast,
 "Nor can Papa with all his eloquence
 "Be reckoned on to help as heretofore!"
 "Whereat Cinone pouts; then, spark-
 ishly —
 "Papa knew better than aggrieve his
 Pope,
 "And baulk him of his grudge against
 our Count,
 "Else he'd have argued-off Bottini's' . . .
 what?
 "His nose,' — the rogue! well parried of
 the boy!
 "He's long since out of Cæsar (eight years
 old)
 "And as for tripping in Eutropius . .
 well,
 "Reason the more that we strain every
 nerve
 "To do him justice, mould a model-
 mouth,
 "A Bartolus-cum-Baldo for next age:
 "For that I purse the pieces, work the
 brain,
 "And want both Gomez and the marriage-
 case,
 "Success with which shall plaster aught of
 pate
 "That's broken in me by Bottini's flail,
 "And bruise his own, belike, that wags
 and brags.
 "*Adverti supplico humiliter*
 "Quod² don't the fungus see, the fop
 divine
 "That one hand drives two horses, left 60
 and right?
 "With this rein did I rescue from the
 ditch
 "The fortune of our Franceschini, keep
 "Unsplashed the credit of a noble House,
 "And set the fashionable cause at Rome
 "A-prancing till bystanders shouted
 'ware!
 "The other rein's judicious management
 "Suffered old Somebody to keep the
 pace,
 "Hobblingly play the roadster: who but
 he
 "Had his opinion, was not led by the nose
 "In leash of quibbles strung to look like 70
 law!
 "You'll soon see, — when I go to pay
 devoir
 "And compliment him on confuting me, —
 "If, by a back-swing of the pendulum,
 "Grace be not, thick and threefold, conse-
 quent.
 "I must decide as I see proper, Don!

¹ *Reliqua*, &c.: "the rest let us postpone
 'ill to-morrow."

² *Adverti*, &c.: "I humbly beg that it may
 be noticed."

"I'm Pope, I have my inward lights for guide.
 "Had learning been the matter in dispute,
 "Could eloquence avail to gainsay fact,
 "Yours were the victory, be comforted!
 "Cinuzzo will be gainer by it all.
 "Quick then with Gomez, hot and hot next case!"

Follows, a letter, takes the other side.
 Tall blue-eyed Fisc whose head is capped with cloud,
 Doctor Bottini, — to no matter who,
 Writes on the Monday two days afterward.
 Now shall the honest championship of right,
 Crowned with success, enjoy at last, unblamed,
 Moderate triumph! Now shall eloquence
 Poured forth in fancied floods for virtue's sake,
 (The print is sorrowfully dyked and dammed,
 But shows where fain the unbridled force would flow,
 Finding a channel) — now shall this refresh
 The thirsty donor with a drop or two!
 Here has been truth at issue with a lie:
 Let who gained truth the day have handsome pride
 In his own prowess! Eh! What ails the man?

"Well, it is over, ends as I foresaw:
 "Easily proved, Pompilia's innocence!
 "Catch them entrusting Guido's guilt to me
 "Who had, as usual, the plain truth to plead.
 "I always knew the clearness of the stream
 "Would show the fish so thoroughly, child might prong
 "The clumsy monster: with no mud to splash,
 "Small credit to lynx-eye and lightning-spear!
 "This Guido, — (much sport he contrived to make,
 "Who at first twist, preamble of the cord,
 "Turned white, told all, like the poltroon he was!) —
 "Finished, as you expect, a penitent,
 "Fully confessed his crime, and made amends,
 "And, edifying Rome last Saturday,
 "Died like a saint, poor devil! That's the man
 "The gods still give to my antagonist:
 "Imagine how Arcangeli claps wing

"And crows! 'Such formidable facts to face,
 "So naked to attack, my client here, 4c
 "And yet I kept a month the Fisc at bay,
 "And in the end had foiled him of the prize
 "By this arch-stroke, this plea of privilege,
 "But that the Pope must gratify his whim,
 "Put in his word, poor old man, — let it pass!
 " — Such is the cue to which all Rome responds.
 "What with the plain truth gives me to uphold,
 "And, should I let truth slip, the Pope at hand
 "To pick up, steady her on legs again,
 "My office turns a pleasantry indeed! 5c
 "Not that the burly boaster did one jot
 "O' the little was to do — young Spreti's work!
 "But for him, — mannikin and dandiprat
 "Mere candle-end and inch of cleverness
 "Stuck on Arcangeli's save-all, — but for him
 "The spruce young Spreti, what is bad were worse!
 "I looked that Rome should have the natural gird
 "At advocate with case that proves itself;
 "I knew Arcangeli would grin and brag:
 "But what say you to one impertinence 6c
 "Might move a stone? That monk, you are to know,
 "That barefoot Augustinian whose report
 "O' the dying woman's words did detriment
 "To my best points it took the freshness from,
 " — That meddler preached to purpose yesterday
 "At San Lorenzo as a winding-up
 "O' the show which proved a treasure to the church.
 "Out comes his sermon smoking from the press:
 "Its text — 'Let God be true, and every man
 "A liar' — and its application, this 7c
 "The longest-winded of the paragraphs,
 "I straight unstitch, tear out and treat you with:
 "Tis piping hot and posts through Rome to-day.
 "Remember it, as I engage to do!

"But if you rather be disposed to see
 "In the result of the long trial here, —

- "This dealing doom to guilt and doling
 praise
 "To innocency, — any proof that truth
 "May look for vindication from the world,
 "Much will you have misread the signs, I
 say.
 "God, who seems acquiescent in the main
 "With those who add 'So will he ever
 sleep'
 "Flutters their foolishness from time to
 time,
 "Puts forth His right-hand recognisably;
 "Even as, to fools who deem He needs
 must right
 10 "Wrong on the instant, as if earth were
 heaven,
 "He wakes remonstrance — 'Passive,
 Lord, how long?'
 "Because Pompilia's purity prevails,
 "Conclude you, all truth triumphs in the
 end?
 "So might those old inhabitants of the ark,
 "Witnessing haply their dove's safe return,
 "Pronounce there was no danger, all the
 while
 "O' the deluge, to the creature's counter-
 parts,
 "Aught that beat wing i' the world, was
 white or soft, —
 "And that the lark, the thrush, the culver¹
 too,
 20 "Might equally have traversed air, found
 earth,
 "And brought back olive-branch in un-
 harmed bill.
 "Methinks I hear the Patriarch's warning
 voice —
 "'Though this one breast, by miracle,
 return,
 "'No wave rolls by, in all the waste, but
 bears
 "'Within it some dead dove-like thing as
 dear,
 "'Beauty made blank and harmlessness
 destroyed!
 "How many chaste and noble sister-fames
 "Wanted the extricating hand, so lie
 "Strangled, for one Pompilia proud above
 30 "The welter, plucked from the world's
 calumny,
 "Stupidity, simplicity, — who cares?
 "Romans! An elder race possessed your
 land
 "Long ago, and a false faith lingered still,
 'As shades do, though the morning-star
 be out.
 "Doubtless some pagan of the twilight-day
 "Has often pointed to a cavern-mouth
 "Obnoxious to beholders, hard by Rome,
 "And said, — nor he a bad man, no, nor
 fool,
 "Only a man born blind like all his
 mates, —
 "Here skulk in safety, lurk, defying law.
 "The devotees to execrable creed,
 "Adoring — with what culture . . . Jove,
 avert
 "Thy vengeance from us worshippers of
 thee! . . .
 "What rites obscene — their idol-god, an
 Ass!
 "So went the word forth, so acceptance
 found,
 "So century re-echoed century,
 "Cursed the accursed, — and so, from sire
 to son,
 "You Romans cried 'The offscourings of
 our race
 "Corrupt within the depths there: fitly
 fiends
 "Perform a temple-service o'er the dead:
 "Child, gather garment round thee, pass
 nor pry!
 "Thus groaned your generations: till the
 time
 "Grew ripe, and lightning had revealed,
 belike, —
 "Thro' crevice peeped into by curious
 fear, —
 "Some object even fear could recognise
 "I' the place of spectres; on the illumined
 wall,
 "To-wit, some nook, tradition talks about,
 "Narrow and short, a corpse's length, no
 more:
 "And by it, in the due receptacle,
 "The little rude brown lamp of earthen-
 ware,
 "The cruse, was meant for flowers but now
 held blood,
 "The rough-scratched palm-branch, and
 the legend left
 "Pro Christo. Then the mystery lay
 clear:
 "The abhorred one was a martyr all the
 time,
 "Heaven's saint whereof earth was not
 worthy. What?
 "Do you continue in the old belief?
 "Where blackness bides unbroke, must
 devils brood?
 "Is it so certain not another cell
 "O' the myriad that make up the cata-
 comb
 "Contains some saint a second flash would
 show?
 "Will you ascend into the light of day
 "And, having recognised a martyr's
 shrine,
 "Go join the votaries that gape around
 "Each vulgar god that awes the market-
 place?
 "Are these the objects of your praising?
 See!

¹ Culver: wood-pigeon.

- "In the outstretched right hand of Apollo,
 there,
 "Lies screened a scorpion: housed amid
 the folds
 "Of Juno's mantle lurks a centipede!
 "Each statue of a god were fittier styled
 "Demon and devil. Glorify no brass
 "That shines like burnished gold in noon-
 day glare,
 "For fools! Be otherwise instructed,
 you!
 "And preferably ponder, ere ye judge,
 "Each incident of this strange human play
 "Privily acted on a theatre
 "That seemed secure from every gaze but
 God's, —
 "Till, of a sudden, earthquake laid wall
 low
 "And let the world perceive wild work
 inside
 "And how, in petrification of surprise,
 "The actors stood, — raised arm and
 planted foot, —
 "Mouth as it made, eye as it evidenced,
 "Despairing shriek, triumphant hate, —
 transfixed,
 "Both he who takes and she who yields the
 life.
 "As ye become spectators of this scene,
 "Watch obscuration of a pearl-pure fame
 "By vapoury films, enwoven circumstance,
 "— A soul made weak by its pathetic
 want
 "Of just the first apprenticeship to sin
 "Which thenceforth makes the sinning
 soul secure
 "From all foes save itself, souls' truest
 foe, —
 "Since egg turned snake needs fear no
 serpentry, —
 "As ye behold this web of circumstance
 "Deepen the more for every thrill and
 throe,
 "Convulsive effort to disperse the films
 "And disenmesh the fame o' the martyr, —
 mark
 "How all those means, the unfriended one
 pursues,
 "To keep the treasure trusted to her
 breast,
 "Each struggle in 'the flight from death to
 life,
 "How all, by procurement of the powers
 "Of darkness, are transformed, — no
 single ray,
 "Shot forth to show and save the inmost
 star,
 "But, passed as through hell's prism, pro-
 ceeding black
 "To the world that hates white: as ye
 watch, I say,
 "Till dusk and such defacement grow
 eclipse
- "By, — marvellous perversity of man! — 40
 "The inadequacy and inaptitude
 "Of that self-same machine, that very law
 "Man vaunts, devised to dissipate the
 gloom,
 "Rescue the drowning orb from calumny,
 "— Hear law, appointed to defend the
 just,
 "Submit, for best defence, that wickedness
 "Was bred of flesh and innate with the
 bone
 "Borne by Pompilia's spirit for a space,
 "And no mere chance fault, passionate and
 brief:
 "Finally, when ye find, — after this touch 50
 "Of man's protection which intends to
 mar
 "The last pin-point of light and damn the
 disc, —
 "One wave of the hand of God amid the
 worlds
 "Bid vapour vanish, darkness flee away,
 "And let the vexed star culminate in peace
 "Approachable no more by earthly
 mist —
 "What I call God's hand, — you, per-
 haps, — mere chance
 "Of the true instinct of an old good man
 "Who happens to hate darkness and love
 light, —
 "In whom too was the eye that saw, not 60
 dim,
 "The natural force to do the thing he saw,
 "Nowise abated, — both by miracle, —
 "All this well pondered, — I demand as-
 sent
 "To the enunciation of my text
 "In face of one proof more that 'God is
 true
 "And every man a liar' — that who trusts
 "To human testimony for a fact
 "Gets this sole fact — himself is proved a
 fool;
 "Man's speech being false, if but by conse-
 quence
 "That only strength is true: while man is 70
 weak,
 "And, since truth seems reserved for
 heaven not earth,
 "Plagued here by earth's prerogative of
 lies,
 "Should learn to love and long for what,
 one day,
 "Approved by life's probation, he may
 speak.
 "For me, the weary and worn, who haply
 prompt
 "To mirth or pity, as I move the mood, —
 "A friar who glides unnoticed to the grave,
 "With these bare feet, coarse robe and
 ropegirt waist, —
 "I have long since renounced your world,
 ye know:

"Yet what forbids I weigh the prize for-
 gone,
 "The worldly worth? I dare, as I were
 dead,
 "Disinterestedly judge this and that
 "Good ye account good: but God tries
 the heart.
 "Still, if you question me of my content
 "At having put each human pleasure by,
 "I answer, but the urgency of truth:
 "As this world seems, I dare not say I
 know
 "— Apart from Christ's assurance which
 decides —
 10 "Whether I have not failed to taste much
 joy.
 "For many a doubt will fain perturb my
 choice —
 "Many a dream of life spent otherwise —
 "How human love, in varied shapes, might
 work
 "As glory, or as rapture, or as grace:
 "How consanquancy with the books that
 teach,
 "The arts that help, — how, to grow good
 and great,
 "Rather than simply good, and bring
 thereby
 "Goodness to breathe and live, nor, born
 i' the brain,
 "Die there, — how these and many
 another gift
 20 "Of life are precious though abjured by me.
 "But, for one prize, best meed of mightiest
 man,
 "Arch-object of ambition, — earthly praise,
 "Repute o' the world, the flourish of loud
 trump,
 "The softer social fluting, — Oh, for these,
 "— No, my friends! Fame, — that bub-
 ble which, world-wide
 "Each blows and bids his neighbour lend
 a breath,
 "That so he haply may behold thereon
 "One more enlarged distorted false fool's-
 face,
 "Until some glassy nothing grown as big
 30 "Send by a touch the imperishable to
 suds, —
 "No, in renouncing fame, my loss was
 light,
 "Choosing obscurity, my chance was
 well!"

Didst ever touch such ampollosity
 As the monk's own bubble, let alone its
 spite?
 What's his speech for, but just the fame
 he flouts?
 How he dares reprehend both high and low,
 Nor stoops to turn the sentence "God is
 true
 "And every man a liar — save the Pope

"Happily reigning — my respects to him!"
 And so round off the period. Molinism
 Simple and pure! To what pitch get we
 next?

I find that, for first pleasant consequence,
 Gomez, who had intended to appeal
 From the absurd decision of the Court,
 Declines, though plain enough his privi-
 lege,

To call on help from lawyers any more —
 Resolves earth's liars may possess the
 world

Till God have had sufficiency of both:
 So may I whistle for my job and fee!

But, for this virulent and rabid monk, — 5
 If law be an inadequate machine,
 And advocacy, froth and impotence,
 We shall soon see, my blatant brother!
 That's

Exactly what I hope to show your sort!
 For, by a veritable piece of luck,
 The providence, you monks round period
 with,

All may be gloriously retrieved. Perpend!
 That Monastery of the Convertites
 Whereto the Court consigned Pompilia
 first,

— Observe, if convertite, why, sinner then, 6
 Or what's the pertinency of award? —
 And whither she was late returned to die,
 — Still in their jurisdiction, mark again! —
 That thrifty Sisterhood, for perquisite,
 Claims every piece whereof may die pos-
 sessed

Each sinner in the circuit of its walls.
 Now, this Pompilia seeing that, by death
 O' the couple, all their wealth devolved on
 her,

Straight utilised the respite ere decease,
 By regular conveyance of the goods 7
 She thought her own, to will and to de-
 vise, —

Gave all to friends, Tighetti and the like,
 In trust for him she held her son and heir,
 Gaetano, — trust which ends with in-
 fancy:

So willing and devising, since assured
 The justice of the Court would presently
 Confirm her in her rights and exculpate,
 Re-integrate and rehabilitate —
 Place her as, through my pleading, now
 she stands.

But here's the capital mistake: the Court 8
 Found Guido guilty, — but pronounced
 no word

About the innocence of his wife:
 I grounded charge on broader base, I
 hope!

No matter whether wife be true or false,
 The husband must not push aside the law,
 And punish of a sudden: that's the point:
 Gather from out my speech the contrary!
 It follows that Pompilia, unrelieved

By formal sentence from imputed fault,
Remains unfit to have and to dispose
Of property which law provides shall lapse.
Wherefore the Monastery claims its due:
And whose, pray, whose the office, but the
Fisc's?

Who but I institute procedure next
Against the person of dishonest life,
Pompilia whom last week I sainted so?
I it is teach the monk what scripture
means,

o And that the tongue should prove a two-
edged sword,
No axe sharp one side, blunt the other
way,
Like what amused the town at Guido's
cost!

Astræa redux! I've a second chance
Before the self-same Court o' the Governor
Who soon shall see volte-face and chop,
change sides.

Accordingly, I charge you on your life,
Send me with all dispatch the judgment
late

O' the Florence Rota Court, confirmative
O' the prior judgment at Arezzo, clenched
o Again by the Granducal signature,
Wherein Pompilia is convicted, doomed,
And only destined to escape through flight
The proper punishment. Send me the
piece, —

I'll work it! And this foul-mouthed friar
shall find

His Noah's-dove that brought the olive back
Turn into quite the other sooty scout,
The raven, Noah first put forth the ark,
Which never came back but ate carcasses!

30 No power of life and death i' the learned
tongue?

Methinks I am already at my speech,
Startle the world with "Thou, Pompilia,
thus?

"How is the fine gold of the Temple dim!"
And so forth. But the courier bids me
close,

And clip away one joke that runs through
Rome,

Side by side with the sermon which I send.
How like the heartlessness of the old hunks
Arcangeli! His Count is hardly cold,

40 The client whom his blunders sacrificed,
When somebody must needs describe the
scene —

How the procession ended at the church
That boasts the famous relic:¹ quoth our
brute,

"Why, that's just Martial's phrase for
'make an end' —

"*Ad umbilicum sic perventum est!*"

The callous dog, — let who will cut off head,
He cuts a joke and cares no more than so!
I think my speech shall modify his mirth.
"How is the fine gold dim!" — but send
the piece!

Alack, Bottini, what is my next word
But death to all that hope? The Instru- 50
ment

Is plain before me, print that ends my
Book

With the definitive verdict of the Court,
Dated September, six months afterward,
(Such trouble and so long the old Pope
gave!)

"In restitution of the perfect fame
"Of dead Pompilia, *quondam* Guido's
wife,

"And warrant to her representative
"Domenico Tighetti, barred hereby,
"While doing duty in his guardianship,
"From all molesting, all disquietude. 60

"Each perturbation and vexation brought
"Or threatened to be brought against the
heir

"By the Most Venerable Convent called
"Saint Mary Magdalen o' the Convertites
"I' the Corso."

Justice done a second time!
Well judged, Marc Antony, *Locum-tenens*
O' the Governor, a Venturini too!
For which I save thy name, — last of the
list!

Next year but one, completing his nine
years

Of rule in Rome, died Innocent my Pope 70
— By some account, on his accession-day.
If he thought doubt would do the next age
good,

'Tis pity he died unapprised what birth
His reign may boast of, be remembered
by —

Terrible Pope, too, of a kind, — Voltaire.

And so an end of all i' the story. Strain
Never so much my eyes, I miss the mark
If lived or died that Gaetano, child
Of Guido and Pompilia: only find,
Immediately upon his father's death, 80
A record, in the annals of the town —
That Porzia, sister of our Guido, moved
The Priors of Arezzo and their head
Its Gonfalonier to give loyally
A public attestation of the right
O' the Franceschini to all reverence —
Apparently because of the incident
O' the murder, — there's no mention made
o' the crime,

¹ The famous relic: see p. 808, l. 45. *Umbilicus*
also means an ornamental knob at the end of
the stick round which books, in Greek and

Roman times, used to be rolled; hence the phrase
ad umbilicum pervenire (Martial, iv. 89) meant
"to reach the end" of a book.

- But what else could have caused such urgency
To cure the mob, just then, of greediness
For scandal, love of lying vanity,
And appetite to swallow crude reports
That bring annoyance to their betters? —
bane
Which, here, was promptly met by antidote.
I like and shall translate the eloquence
Of nearly the worst Latin ever writ:
"Since antique time whereof the memory
10 "Holds the beginning, to this present hour,
"The Franceschini ever shone, and shine
"Still I' the primary rank, supreme amid
"The lustrous of Arezzo, proud to own
"In this great family, the flag-bearer,
"Guide of her steps and guardian against
foe, —
"As in the first beginning, so to-day!"
There, would you disbelieve the annalist,
Go rather by the babble of a bard?
I thought, Arezzo, thou hadst fitter souls,
20 Petrarch,¹ — nay, Buonarroti at a pinch,
To do thee credit as *vexillifer*!²
Was it mere mirth the Patavinian³ meant,
Making thee out, in his veracious page,
Founded by Janus of the Double Face?
Well, proving of such perfect parentage,
Our Gaetano, born of love and hate,
Did the babe live or die? I fain would
find!
What were his fancies if he grew a man?
Was he proud, — a true scion of the stock
30 Which bore the blazon, shall make bright
my page —
Shield, Azure, on a Triple Mountain, Or,
A Palm-tree, Proper, whereunto is tied
A Greyhound, Rampant, striving in the
slips?
Or did he love his mother, the base-born,
And fight i' the ranks, unnoticed by the
world?
Such, then, the final state o' the story. So
Did the Star Wormwood in a blazing fall
Frighten awhile the waters and lie lost.
So did this old woe fade from memory:
40 Till after, in the fulness of the days,
I needs must find an ember yet un-
quenched,
And, breathing, blow the spark to flame.
It lives,
If precious be the soul of man to man.
So, British Public, who may like me yet,
(Marry and amen!) learn one lesson hence
Of many which whatever lives should
teach:
- This lesson, that our human speech is
naught,
Our human testimony false, our fame
And human estimation words and wind.
Why take the artistic way to prove so
much?
Because, it is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at
least.
How look a brother in the face and say
"Thy right is wrong, eyes hast thou yet
art blind,
"Thine ears are stuffed and stopped, de-
spite their length:
"And, oh, the foolishness thou countest
faith!"
Say this as silverly as tongue can troll —
The anger of the man may be endured,
The shrug, the disappointed eyes of him 60
Are not so bad to bear — but here's the
plague
That all this trouble comes of telling truth,
Which truth, by when it reaches him, looks
false,
Seems to be just the thing it would sup-
plant,
Nor recognisable by whom it left:
While falsehood would have done the work
of truth.
But Art, — wherein man nowise speaks to
men,
Only to mankind, — Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the
thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the 70
mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show
truth,
Beyond mere imagery on the wall, —
So, note by note, bring music from your
mind,
Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived, —
So write a book shall mean beyond the
facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.
And save the soul! If this intent save
mine, —
If the rough ore be rounded to a ring,
Render all duty which good ring should do,
And, failing grace, succeed in guardian- 80
ship, —
Might mine but lie outside thine, Lyric
Love,
Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet⁴
praised)
Linking our England to his Italy!

¹ Petrarch was born in the town of Arezzo, and Buonarroti (Michel Angelo) in the territory, though not in the town itself.

² *Vexillifer*: standard-bearer.

³ *The Patavinian*: Livy.

⁴ *The poet*: Tommaseo, who wrote the inscription on the tablet placed on the walls of Casa Guidi by the municipality of Florence to the memory of Mrs. Browning: "Qui scrisse e morì E. B. Browning, che . . . fece del suo verso aureo anello fra Italia e Inghilterra."

PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU,

SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.

1871.

[The Prince stands for the Third Napoleon, the author — it may be the unwilling author — of the *coup d'état* of December 1851. For eighteen years he was Emperor of the French, the ally of Great Britain, and to some extent the Liberator of Italy. He and his came to an end at Sedan in 1870.]

PRINCE HOHENSTIEL- SCHWANGAU,

SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY

Υδραν φονεύσας, μυρίων τ' ἄλλων πόνων
διήλθον ἀγέλας . . .
τὸ λοῖσθιον δὲ τόνδ' ἔτλην τάλας πόνον,
. . . δῶμα θριγκῶσαι κακοῖς.

I slew the Hydra, and from labour pass'd
To labour — tribes of labours! Till, at
last,

Attempting one more labour, in a trice,
Alack, with ills I *crowned the edifice*.

You have seen better days, dear? So have
I —

And worse too, for they brought no such
bud-mouth

As yours to lip "You wish you knew me!"
Well,

Wise men, 'tis said, have sometimes wished
the same,

And wished and had their trouble for their
pains.

Suppose my Œdipus should lurk at last
Under a pork-pie hat and crinoline,

And, lateish, pounce on Sphinx in Leices-
ter Square?

Or likelier, what if Sphinx in wise old age,
Grown sick of snapping foolish people's
heads,

And jealous for her riddle's proper rede, —
Jealous that the good trick which served
the turn

Have justice rendered it, nor class one day
With friend' Home's ' stilts and tongs and
medium-ware, —

What if the once redoubted Sphinx, I say,
(Because night draws on, and the sands
increase,

And desert-whispers grow a prophecy)
Tell all to Corinth of her own accord,
Bright Corinth, not dull Thebes, for Laïs'
sake,

Who finds me hardly grey, and likes my
nose,

The notorious spiritualist and impostor.

And thinks a man of sixty at the prime?
Good! It shall be! Revealment of my-
self!

But listen, for we must co-operate;
I don't drink tea: permit me the cigar!

First, how to make the matter plain, of
course —

What was the law by which I lived. Let's
see:

Ay, we must take one instant of my life
Spent sitting by your side in this neat room:
Watch well the way I use it, and don't
laugh!

Here's paper on the table, pen and ink: 30
Give me the soiled bit — not the pretty
rose!

See! having sat an hour, I'm rested now,
Therefore want work: and spy no better
work

For eye and hand and mind that guides
them both,

During this instant, than to draw my pen
From blot One — thus — up, up to blot

Two — thus —

Which I at last reach, thus, and here's
my line

Five inches long and tolerably straight:
Better to draw than leave undrawn, I think,

Fitter to do than let alone, I hold, 40
Though better, fitter, by but one degree.

Therefore it was that, rather than sit still
Simply, my right-hand drew it while my
left

Pulled smooth and pinched the moustache
to a point.

Now I permit your plump lips to unpurse:
"So far, one possibly may understand

"Without recourse to witchcraft!" True,
my dear.

Thus folks begin with Euclid, — finish,
how?

Trying to square the circle! — at any rate,
Solving abstruser problems than this first 50

"How find the nearest way 'twixt point and
point."

Deal but with moral mathematics so —
 Master one merest moment's work of mine,
 Even this practising with pen and ink, —
 Demonstrate why I rather plied the quill
 Than left the space a blank, — you gain a
 fact,
 And God knows what a fact's worth! So
 proceed
 By inference from just this moral fact
 — I don't say, to that plaguy quadrature
 "What the whole man meant, whom you
 wish you knew,"
 10 But, what meant certain things he did of
 old,
 Which puzzled Europe, — why, you'll find
 them plain,
 This way, not otherwise: I guarantee,
 Understand one, you comprehend the rest.
 Rays from all round converge to any point:
 Study the point then ere you track the rays!
 The size o' the circle's nothing; subdivide
 Earth, and earth's smallest grain of mus-
 tard-seed,
 You count as many parts, small matching
 large,
 If you can use the mind's eye: otherwise,
 20 Material optics, being gross at best,
 Prefer the large and leave our mind the
 small —
 And pray how many folk have minds can
 see?
 Certainly you — and somebody in Thrace
 Whose name escapes me at the moment.
 You —
 Lend me your mind then! Analyse with
 me
 This instance of the line 'twixt blot and blot
 I rather chose to draw than leave a blank,
 Things else being equal. You are taught
 thereby
 That 'tis my nature, when I am at ease,
 30 Rather than idle out my life too long,
 To want to do a thing — to put a thought,
 Whether a great thought or a little one,
 Into an act, as nearly as may be.
 Make what is absolutely new — I can't,
 Mar what is made already well enough —
 I won't: but turn to best account the thing
 That's half-made — that I can. Two
 blots, you saw
 I knew how to extend into a line
 Symmetric on the sheet they blurred
 before —
 40 Such little act sufficed, this time, such
 thought.

Now, we'll extend rays, widen out the
 verge,
 Describe a larger circle: leave this first
 Clod of an instance we began with, rise
 To the complete world many clods effect.
 Only continue patient while I throw,
 Delver-like, spadeful after spadeful up,

Just as truths, come the subsoil of me,
 mould
 Whence spring my moods: your object, —
 just to find,
 Alike from handlift and from barrow-load,
 What salts and silts may constitute the
 earth —
 If it be proper stuff to blow man glass,
 Or bake him pottery, bear him oaks or
 wheat —
 What's the born of me, in brief; which found,
 all's known.
 If it were genius did the digging-job,
 Logic would speedily sift its product
 smooth
 And leave the crude truths bare for poetry;
 But I'm no poet, and am stiff i' the back.
 What one spread fails to bring, another
 may.
 In goes the shovel and out comes scoop —
 as here!

I live to please myself. I recognise 6
 Power passing mine, immeasurable, God —
 Above me, whom He made, as heaven
 beyond
 Earth — to use figures which assist our
 sense.
 I know that He is there as I am here,
 By the same proof, which seems no proof
 at all,
 It so exceeds familiar forms of proof.
 Why "there," not "here"? Because,
 when I say "there,"
 I treat the feeling with distincter shape
 That space exists between us: I, — not
 He, —
 Live, think, do human work here — no 7
 machine,
 His will moves, but a being by myself
 His, and not He who made me for a work,
 Watches my working, judges its effect
 But does not interpose. He did so once,
 And probably will again some time — not
 now,
 Life being the minute of mankind, not God's,
 In a certain sense, like time before and time
 After man's earthly life, so far as man
 Needs apprehend the matter. Am I clear?
 Suppose I bid a courier take to-night 8
 (. . . Once for all, let me talk as if I
 smoked
 Yet in the Residenz, a personage:
 I must still represent the thing I was,
 Galvanically make dead muscle play,
 Or how shall I illustrate muscle's use?)
 I could then, last July, bid courier take
 Message for me, post-haste, a thousand
 miles.
 I bid him, since I have the right to bid,
 And, my part done so far, his part begins;
 He starts with due equipment, will and 9
 power,

Means he may use, misuse, not use at all,
 At his discretion, at his peril too.
 I leave him to himself: but, journey done,
 I count the minutes, call for the result
 In quickness and the courier quality,
 Weigh its worth, and then punish or reward
 According to proved service; not before.
 Meantime, he sleeps through noontide,
 rides till dawn,
 Sticks to the straight road, tries the crooked
 path,
 Measures and manages resource, trusts,
 doubts
 Advisers by the wayside, does his best
 At his discretion, lags or launches forth,
 (He knows and I know) at his peril too.
 You see? Exactly thus men stand to God:
 I with my courier, God with me. Just so
 I have His bidding to perform; but mind
 And body, all of me, though made and
 meant
 For that sole service, must consult, concert
 With my own self and nobody beside,
 How to effect the same: God helps not
 else.
 'Tis I who, with my stock of craft and
 strength,
 Choose the directer cut across the hedge,
 Or keep the foot-track that respects a crop.
 Lie down and rest, rise up and run, —
 live spare,
 Feed free, — all that's my business: but,
 arrive,
 Deliver message, bring the answer back,
 And make my bow, I must: then God will
 speak,
 Praise me or haply blame as service proves.
 To other men, to each and everyone,
 Another law! what likelier? God, per-
 chance,
 Grants each new man, by some as new a
 mode,
 Intercommunication with Himself,
 Wreaking on finiteness infinitude;
 By such a series of effects, gives each
 Last His own imprint: old yet ever new
 The process: 'tis the way of Deity.
 How it succeeds He knows: I only know
 That varied modes of creatureship abound,
 Implying just as varied intercourse
 For each with the creator of them all.
 Each has his own mind and no other's
 mode.
 What mode may yours be? I shall sym-
 pathise!
 No doubt, you, good young lady that you
 are,
 Despite a natural naughtiness or two,
 Turn eyes up like a Pradier Magdalen¹
 And see an outspread providential hand

¹ In the Louvre. Pradier was a famous scul-
 tor. His statue of Rousseau is at Geneva.

Above the owl's-wing aigrette — guard
 and guide —
 Visibly o'er your path, about your bed,
 Through all your practisings with London-
 town.
 It points, you go; it stays fixed, and you 50
 stop;
 You quicken its procedure by a word
 Spoken, a thought in silence, prayer and
 praise.
 Well, I believe that such a hand may stoop,
 And such appeals to it may stave off harm,
 Pacify the grim guardian of this Square,
 And stand you in good stead on quarter-
 day:
 Quite possible in your case; not in mine.
 "Ah, but I choose to make the difference,
 Find the emancipation?" No, I hope!
 If I deceive myself, take noon for night, 60
 Please to become determinedly blind
 To the true ordinance of human life,
 Through mere presumption — that is my
 affair,
 And truly a grave one; but as grave I
 think
 Your affair, yours, the specially observed —
 Each favoured person that perceives his
 path
 Pointed him, inch by inch, and looks above
 For guidance, through the mazes of this
 world,
 In what we call its meanest life-career
 — Not how to manage Europe properly, 70
 But how keep open shop, and yet pay rent,
 Rear household, and make both ends meet,
 the same.
 I say, such man is no less tasked than I
 To duly take the path appointed him
 By whatsoever sign he recognise.
 Our insincerity on both our heads!
 No matter what the object of a life,
 Small work or large, — the making thrive
 a shop,
 Or seeing that an empire take no harm, —
 There are known fruits to judge obedience 80
 by.
 You've read a ton's weight, now, of news-
 paper —
 Lives of me, gabble about the kind of
 prince —
 You know my work i' the rough; I ask
 you, then,
 Do I appear subordinated less
 To hand-impulsion, one prime push for all,
 Than little lives of men, the multitude
 That cried out, every quarter of an hour,
 For fresh instructions, did or did not work,
 And praised in the odd minutes?

Eh, my dear?
 Such is the reason why I acquiesced 90
 In doing what seemed best for me to do,
 So as to please myself on the great scale.

- Having regard to immortality
 No less than life — did that which head
 and heart
 Prescribed my hand, in measure with its
 means
 Of doing — used my special stock of
 power —
 Not from the aforesaid head and heart
 alone,
 But every sort of helpful circumstance,
 Some problematic and some nondescript:
 All regulated by the single care
 I' the last resort — that I made thoroughly
 serve
- 10 The when and how, toiled where was need,
 reposed
 As resolutely at the proper point,
 Braved sorrow, courted joy, to just one
 end:
 Namely, that just the creature I was bound
 To be, I should become, nor thwart at all
 God's purpose in creation. I conceive
 No other duty possible to man, —
 Highest mind, lowest mind, no other law
 By which to judge life failure or success:
 What folk call being saved or cast away.
- 20 Such was my rule of life: I worked my
 best
 Subject to ultimate judgment, God's not
 man's.
 Well then, this settled, — take your tea, I
 beg,
 And meditate the fact, 'twixt sip and sip, —
 This settled — why I pleased myself, you
 saw,
 By turning blot and blot into a line,
 O' the little scale, — we'll try now (as your
 tongue
 Tries the concluding sugar-drop) what's
 meant
 To please me most o' the great scale. Why,
 just now,
 With nothing else to do within my reach,
- 30 Did I prefer making two blots one line
 To making yet another separate
 Third blot, and leaving those I found un-
 linked?
 It meant, I like to use the thing I find,
 Rather than strive at unfound novelty:
 I make the best of the old, nor try for new.
 Such will to act, such choice of action's
 way,
 Constitute — when at work on the great
 scale,
 Driven to their farthest natural conse-
 quence
 By all the help from all the means — my
 own
- 40 Particular faculty of serving God,
 Instinct for putting power to exercise
 Upon some wish and want o' the time, I
 prove
 Possible to mankind as best I may.
- This constitutes my mission, — grant the
 phrase, —
 Namely, to rule men — men within my
 reach,
 To order, influence and dispose them so
 As render solid and stabilize
 Mankind in particles, the light and loose,
 For their good and my pleasure in the
 act.
 Such good accomplished proves twice good
 to me —
 Good for its own sake, as the just and
 right,
 And, in the effecting also, good again
 To me its agent, tasked as suits my taste.
- Is this much easier to be understood
 At first glance? Now begin the steady
 gaze!
- My rank — (if I must tell you simple
 truth —
 Telling were else not worth the whiff o'
 the weed
 I lose for the tale's sake) — dear, my rank
 i' the world
 Is hard to know and name precisely: err
 I may, but scarcely over-estimate
 My style and title. Do I class with men
 Most useful to their fellows? Possibly, —
 Therefore, in some sort, best; but, greatest
 mind
 And rarest nature? Evidently no.
 A conservator, call me, if you please,
 Not a creator nor destroyer: one
 Who keeps the world safe. I profess to
 trace
 The broken circle of society,
 Dim actual order, I can redescribe
 Not only where some segment silver-true
 Stays clear, but where the breaks of black
 commence
 Baffling you all who want the eye to probe —
 As I make out yon problematic thin
 White paring of your thumb-nail outside
 there,
 Above the plaster-monarch on his steed —
 See an inch, name an ell, and prophesy
 O' the rest that ought to follow, the round
 moon
 Now hiding in the night of things: that
 round,
 I labour to demonstrate moon enough
 For the month's purpose, — that society,
 Render efficient for the age's need:
 Preserving you in either case the old,
 Nor aiming at a new and greater thing,
 A sun for moon, a future to be made
 By first abolishing the present law:
 No such proud task for me by any means!
 History shows you men whose master-
 touch
 Not so much modifies as makes anew:

Minds that transmute nor need restore at all.

A breath of God made manifest in flesh
Subjects the world to change, from time to time,

Alters the whole conditions of our race
Abruptly, not by unperceived degrees
Nor play of elements already there,
But quite new leaven, leavening the lump,
And liker, so, the natural process. See!
Where winter reigned for ages — by a turn
I' the time, some star change, (ask geologists)

The ice-tracts split, clash, splinter and disperse,

And there's an end of immobility,
Silence, and all that tinted pageant, base
To pinnacle, one flush from fairyland
Dead-asleep and deserted somewhere, — see! —

As a fresh sun, wave, spring and joy outburst.

Or else the earth it is, time starts from trance,

Her mountains tremble into fire, her plains
Heave blinded by confusion: what result?
New teeming growth, surprises of strange life

Impossible before, a world broke up
And re-made, order gained by law destroyed.

Not otherwise, in our society
Follow like portents, all as absolute
Regenerations: they have birth at rare
Uncertain unexpected intervals

O' the world, by ministry impossible
Before and after fulness of the days:
Some dervish desert-spectre, swordsman, saint,

Lawgiver, lyrist,—oh, we know the names!
Quite other these than I. Our time requires

No such strange potentate, — who else would dawn, —

No fresh force till the old have spent itself.
Such seems the natural economy.

To shoot a beam into the dark, assists:
To make that beam do fuller service, spread

And utilise such bounty to the height,
That assists also, — and that work is mine.
I recognise, contemplate, and approve
The general compact of society,
Not simply as I see effected good,
But good i' the germ, each chance that's possible

I' the plan traced so far: all results, in short,

For better or worse of the operation due
To those exceptional natures, unlike mine,
Who, helping, thwarting, conscious, unaware,

Did somehow manage to so far describe

This diagram left ready to my hand,
Waiting my turn of trial. I see success,
See failure, see what makes or mars so throughout.

How shall I else but help complete this plan
Of which I know the purpose and approve,
By letting stay therein what seems to stand,
And adding good thereto of easier reach
To-day than yesterday?

So much, no more!
Whereon, "No more than that?" — inquire aggrieved

Half of my critics: "nothing new at all?
The old plan saved, instead of a sponged slate

And fresh-drawn figure?" — while, "So much as that?"

Object their fellows of the other faith: "O

"Leave unscathed the crazy labyrinth
Of alteration and amendment, lines
Which every dabster felt in duty bound
To signalise his power of pen and ink
By adding to a plan once plain enough?
Why keep each fool's bequeathment, scratch and blur

Which overscrawl and underscore the piece —

Nay, strengthen them by touches of your own?"

Well, that's my mission, so I serve the world,

Figure as man o' the moment, — in default

Of somebody inspired to strike such change
Into society — from round to square,
The ellipsis to the rhomboid, how you please,

As suits the size and shape o' the world he finds.

But this I can, — and nobody my peer, —
Do the best with the least change possible:
Carry the incompleteness on, a stage,
Make what was crooked straight, and roughness smooth,

And weakness strong: wherein if I succeed,
It will not prove the worst achievement, secure,

In the eyes at least of one man, one I look
Nowise to catch in critic company:

To-wit, the man inspired, the genius' self
Destined to come and change things thoroughly.

He, at least, finds his business simplified,
Distinguishes the done from undone, reads
Plainly what meant and did not mean this time

We live in, and I work on, and transmit
To such successor: he will operate

On good hard substance, not mere shade and shine.

Let all my critics, born to idleness

And impotency, get their good, and have
 Their hooting at the giver: I am deaf —
 Who find great good in this society,
 Great gain, the purchase of great labour.

Touch

The work I may and must, but — reverent
 In every fall o' the finger-tip, no doubt.
 Perhaps I find all good there's warrant for
 I' the world as yet: nay, to the end of
 time, —

Since evil never means part company
 10 With mankind, only shift side and change
 shape.

I find advance i' the main, and notably
 The Present an improvement on the Past,
 And promise for the Future — which shall
 prove

Only the Present with its rough made
 smooth,

Its indistinctness emphasised; I hope
 No better, nothing newer for mankind,
 But something equably smoothed every-
 where,

Good, reconciled with hardly-quite-as-good
 Instead of good and bad each jostling each.

30 "And that's all?" Ay, and quite enough
 for me!

We have toiled so long to gain what gain
 I find

I' the Present, — let us keep it! We shall
 toil

So long before we gain — if gain God
 grant —

A Future with one touch of difference
 I' the heart of things, and not their outside
 face, —

Let us not risk the whiff of my cigar
 For Fourier, Comte, and all that ends in
 smoke!

This I see clearest probably of men
 With power to act and influence, now alive:

30 Juster than they to the true state of things;
 In consequence, more tolerant that, side
 By side, shall co-exist and thrive alike
 In the age, the various sorts of happiness
 Moral, mark! — not material — moods o'
 the mind

Suited to man and man his opposite:
 Say, minor modes of movement — hence
 to there,

Or thence to here, or simply round about —
 So long as each toe spares its neighbour's
 kibe,

Nor spurs the major march and main
 advance.

40 The love of peace, care for the family,
 Contentment with what's bad but might be
 worse —

Good movements these! and good, too,
 discontent,

So long as that spurs good, which might be
 best,

Into becoming better, anyhow:

Good — pride of country, putting hearth
 and home

I' the back-ground, out of undue promi-
 nence:

Good — yearning after change, strife, vic-
 tory,

And triumph. Each shall have its orbit
 marked,

But no more, — none impede the other's
 path

In this wide world, — though each and
 all alike,

Save for me, fain would spread itself
 through space

And leave its fellow not an inch of way.

I rule and regulate the course, excite,
 Restrain: because the whole machine
 should march

Impelled by those diversely-moving parts,
 Each blind to aught beside its little bent.

Out of the turnings round and round
 inside,

Comes that straightforward world-advance,
 I want,

And none of them supposes God wants
 too

And gets through just their hindrance and
 my help.

I think that to have held the balance straight
 For twenty years, say, weighing claim and

claim,

And giving each its due, no less no more,
 This was good service to humanity,

Right usage of my power in head and heart,
 And reasonable piety beside.

Keep those three points in mind while
 judging me!

You stand, perhaps, for some one man, not
 men, —

Represent this or the other interest,
 Nor mind the general welfare, — so, im-
 pugn

My practice and dispute my value: why?
 You man of faith, I did not tread the world

Into a paste, and thereof make a smooth
 Uniform mound whereon to plant your

flag,

The lily-white, above the blood and brains!

Nor yet did I, you man of faithlessness,
 So roll things to the level which you love,

That you could stand at ease there and
 survey

The universal Nothing undisgraced
 By pert obtrusion of some old church-spire

I' the distance! Neither friend would I
 content,

Nor, as the world were simply meant for
 him,

Thrust out his fellow and mend God's
 mistake.

Why, you two fools, — my dear friends all
 the same, —

Is it some change o' the world and nothing
 else
 Contents you? Should whatever was, not
 be?
 How thanklessly you view things! There's
 the root
 Of the evil, source of the entire mistake:
 You see no worth i' the world, nature and
 life,
 Unless we change what is to what may be,
 Which means, — may be, i' the brain of
 one of you!
 "Reject what is?" — all capabilities —
 Nay, you may style them chances if you
 choose —
 All chances, then, of happiness that lie
 Open to anybody that is born,
 Tumbles into this life and out again, —
 All that may happen, good and evil too,
 I' the space between, to each adventurer
 Upon this 'sixty, Anno Domini:
 A life to live — and such a life! a world
 To learn, one's lifetime in, — and such
 a world!
 How did the foolish ever pass for wise
 By calling life a burden, man a fly
 Or worm or what's most insignificant?
 "O littleness of man!" deplores the bard;
 And then, for fear the Powers should pun-
 ish him,
 "O grandeur of the visible universe
 Our human littleness contrasts withal!
 O sun, O moon, ye mountains and thou
 sea,
 Thou emblem of immensity, thou this,
 That, and the other, — what impertinence
 In man to eat and drink and walk about
 And have his little notions of his own,
 The while some wave sheds foam upon the
 shore!"
 First of all, 'tis a lie some three-times thick:
 The bard, — this sort of speech being
 poetry, —
 The bard puts mankind well outside him-
 self
 And then begins instructing them: "This
 way
 I and my friend the sea conceive of you!
 What would you give to think such thoughts
 as ours
 Of you and the sea together?" Down
 they go
 On the humbled knees of them: at once
 they draw
 Distinction, recognise no mate of theirs
 In one, despite his mock humility,
 So plain a match for what he plays with.
 ... Next,
 The turn of the great ocean-playfellow,
 When the bard, leaving Bond Street very
 far
 From ear-shot, cares not to ventriloquise,
 But tells the sea its home-truths: "You,
 my match?

You, all this terror and immensity
 And what not? Shall I tell you what you
 are?
 Just fit to hitch into a stanza, so
 Wake up and set in motion who's asleep
 O' the other side of you in England, else 50
 Unaware, as folk pace their Bond Street
 now,
 Somebody here despises them so much!
 Between us, — they are the ultimate! to
 them
 And their perception go these lordly
 thoughts:
 Since what were ocean — mane and tail, to
 boot —
 Mused I not here, how make thoughts
 thinkable?
 Start forth my stanza and astound the
 world!
 Back, billows, to your insignificance!
 Deep, you are done with!"

Learn, my gifted friend,
 There are two things i' the world, still 60
 wiser folk
 Accept — intelligence and sympathy.
 You pant about unutterable power
 I' the ocean, all you feel but cannot speak?
 Why, that's the plainest speech about it all.
 You did not feel what was not to be felt.
 Well, then, all else but what man feels is
 nought —
 The wash o' the liquor that o'erbrims the
 cup
 Called man, and runs to waste adown his
 side,
 Perhaps to feed a cataract, — who cares?
 I'll tell you: all the more I know mankind, 70
 The more I thank God, like my grand-
 mother,
 For making me a little lower than
 The angels, honour-clothed and glory-
 crowned:
 This is the honour, — that no thing I know,
 Feel or conceive, but I can make my own
 Somehow, by use of hand or head or heart:
 This is the glory, — that in all conceived,
 Or felt or known, I recognise a mind
 Not mine but like mine, — for the double
 joy, —
 Making all things for me and me for Him. 80
 There's folly for you at this time of day!
 So think it! and enjoy your ignorance
 Of what — no matter for the worthy's
 name —
 Wisdom set working in a noble heart,
 When he, who was earth's best geometer
 Up to that time of day, consigned his life
 With its results into one matchless book,
 The triumph of the human mind so far,
 All in geometry man yet could do:
 And then wrote on the dedication-page 90
 In place of name the universe applauds,
 "But, God, what a geometer art Thou!"

I suppose Heaven is, through Eternity,
The equalising, ever and anon,
In momentary rapture, great with small,
Omniscience with intelligency, God
With man, — the thunder-glow from pole
to pole

Abolishing, a blissful moment-space,
Great cloud alike and small cloud, in one
fire —

As sure to ebb as sure again to flow

When the new receptivity deserves

10 The new completion. There's the Heaven
for me.

And I say, therefore, to live out one's life
I' the world here, with the chance, —
whether by pain

Or pleasure be the process, long or short
The time, august or mean the circumstance
To human eye, — of learning how set foot
Decidedly on some one path to Heaven,
Touch segment in the circle whence all
lines

Lead to the centre equally, red lines

Or black lines, so they but produce them-
selves —

20 This, I do say, — and here my sermon
ends, —

This makes it worth our while to tenderly
Handle a state of things which mend we
might,

Mar we may, but which meanwhile helps
so far.

Therefore my end is — save society!

"And that's all?" twangs the never-failing
taunt

O' the foe — "No novelty, creativeness,
Mark of the master that renews the age?"

"Nay, all that?" rather will demur my
judge

I look to hear some day, nor friend nor
foe —

30 "Did you attain, then, to perceive that God
Knew what He undertook when He made
things?"

Ay: that my task was to co-operate
Rather than play the rival, chop and
change

The order whence comes all the good we
know,

With this, — good's last expression to our
sense, —

That there's a further good conceivable
Beyond the utmost earth can realise:

And, therefore, that to change the agency,
The evil whereby good is brought about —

40 Try to make good do good as evil does —
Were just as if a chemist, wanting white,
And knowing black ingredients bred the
dye,

Insisted these too should be white forsooth!

Correct the evil, mitigate your best,
Blend mild with harsh, and soften black

to grey

If grey may follow with no detriment
To the eventful perfect purity!
But as for hazarding the main result
By hoping to anticipate one half
In the intermediate process, — no, my
friends!

This bad world, I experience and approve;
Your good world, — with no pity, courage,
hope,

Fear, sorrow, joy, — devotedness, in short
Which I account the ultimate of man,
Of which there's not one day nor hour but
brings,

In flower or fruit, some sample of success,
Out of this same society I save —

None of it for me! That I might have
none,

I trapped your tampering knuckles twenty
years.

Such was the task imposed me, such my
end.

Now for the means thereto. Ah, confi-
dence —

Keep we together or part company?
This is the critical minute! "Such my
end?"

Certainly; how could it be otherwise?
Can there be question which was the right
task —

To save or to destroy society?
Why, even prove that, by some miracle,
Destruction were the proper work to choose,
And that a torch best remedies what's

wrong

I' the temple, whence the long procession
wound

Of powers and beauties, earth's achieve-
ments all,

The human strength that strove and over-
threw, —

The human love that, weak itself, crowned
strength, —

The instinct crying "God is whence I
came!" —

The reason laying down the law "And
such

His will i' the world must be!" — the leap
and shout

Of genius "For I hold His very thoughts,
The meaning of the mind of Him!" — nay,

more,

The ingenuities, each active force
That turning in a circle on itself

Looks neither up nor down but keeps the
spot,

Mere creature-like, and, for religion, works,
Works only and works ever, makes and
shapes

And changes, still wrings more of good
from less,

Still stamps some bad out, where was worst
before,

So leaves the handiwork, the act and deed,

Were it but house and land and wealth,
to show
Here was a creature perfect in the kind —
Whether as bee, beaver, or behemoth,
What's the importance? he has done his
work
For work's sake, worked well, earned a
creature's praise; —
I say, concede that same fame, whence de-
ploys
Age after age, all this humanity,
Diverse but ever dear, out of the dark
Behind the altar into the broad day
By the portal — enter, and, concede there
mocks
Each lover of free motion and much space
A perplexed length of apse and aisle and
nave, —
Pillared roof and carved screen, and what
care I? —
Which irk the movement and impede the
march, —
Nay, possibly, bring flat upon his nose
At some odd break-neck angle, by some
freak
Of old-world artistry, that personage
Who, could he but have kept his skirts
from grief
And catching at the hooks and crooks
about,
Had stepped out on the daylight of our time
Plainly the man of the age, — still, still,
I bar
Excessive conflagration in the case.
"Shake the flame freely!" shout the mul-
titude:
The architect approves I stuck my torch
Inside a good stout lantern, hung its light
Above the hooks and crooks, and ended so.
To save society was well: the means
Whereby to save it, — there begins the
doubt
Permitted you, imperative on me;
Were mine the best means? Did I work
aright
With powers appointed me? — since
powers denied
Concern me nothing.

Well, my work reviewed
Fairly, leaves more hope than discouragement,
First, there's the deed done: what I found,
I leave, —
What tottered, I kept stable: if it stand
One month, without sustinment, still
thank me
The twenty years' sustainer! Now, ob-
serve,
Sustaining is no brilliant self-display
Like knocking down or even setting up:
Much bustle these necessitate; and still
To vulgar eye, the mightier of the myth

Is Hercules, who substitutes his own
For Atlas' shoulder and supports the globe
A whole day, — not the passive and ob-
scure
Atlas who bore, ere Hercules was born,
And is to go on bearing that same load
When Hercules turns ash on Ceta's top.
'Tis the transition-stage, the tug and strain,
That strike men: standing still is stupid-
like.
My pressure was too constant on the whole 50
For any part's eruption into space
Mid sparkles, crackling, and much praise
of me.
I saw that, in the ordinary life,
Many of the little make a mass of men
Important beyond greatness here and
there;
As certainly as, in life exceptional,
When old things terminate and new com-
mence,
A solitary great man's worth the world.
God takes the business into His own hands
At such time: who creates the novel flower 60
Contrives to guard and give it breathing-
room:
I merely tend the corn-field, care for crop,
And weed no acre thin to let emerge
What prodigy may stifle there perchance,
— No, though my eye have noted where
he lurks.
Oh those mute myriads that spoke loud
to me —
The eyes that craved to see the light, the
mouths
That sought the daily bread and nothing
more,
The hands that supplicated exercise,
Men that had wives, and women that had 70
babes,
And all these making suit to only live!
Was I to turn aside from husbandry,
Leave hope of harvest for the corn my care,
To play at horticulture, rear some rose
Or poppy into perfect leaf and bloom
When, 'mid the furrows, up was pleased to
sprout
Some man, cause, system, special interest
I ought to study, stop the world meanwhile?
"But I am Liberty, Philanthropy,
Enlightenment, or Patriotism, the power 80
Whereby you are to stand or fall!" cries
each:
"Mine and mine only be the flag you
flaunt!"
And, when I venture to object "Meantime,
What of yon myriads with no flag at all —
My crop which, who flaunts flag must
tread across?"
"Now, this it is to have a puny mind!"
Admire my mental prodigies: "down —
down —
Ever at home o' the level and the low,

- There bides he brooding! Could he look
above,
With less of the owl and more of the eagle
eye,
He'd see there's no way helps the little
cause
Like the attainment of the great. Dare first
The chief emprise; dispel yon cloud be-
tween
The sun and us; nor fear that, though
our heads
Find earlier warmth and comfort from his
ray,
What lies about our feet, the multitude,
Will fail of beneficence presently.
- 10 Come now, let each of us awhile cry truce
To special interests, make common cause
Against the adversary — or perchance
Merè dullard to his own plain interest!
Which of us will you choose? — since
needs must be
Some one o' the warring causes you incline
To hold, i' the main, has right and should
prevail:
Why not adopt and give it prevalence?
Choose strict Faith or lax Incredulity, —
King, Caste and Cultus — or the Rights
of Man,
- 20 Sovereignty of each Proudhon¹ o'er him-
self,
And all that follows in just consequence!
Go free the stranger from a foreign yoke;
Or stay, concentrate energy at home;
Succeed! — when he deserves, the stranger
will.
Comply with the Great Nation's impulse,
print
By force of arms, — since reason pleads in
vain,
And, mid the sweet compulsion, pity
weeps, —
Hohenstiel-Schwangau on the universe!
Snub the Great Nation, cure the impulsive
itch
- 30 With smartest fillip on a restless nose
Was ever launched by thumb and finger!
Bid
Hohenstiel-Schwangau first repeal the tax
On pig-tails and pomatum, and then mind
Abstruser matters for next century!
Is your choice made? Why then, act up
to choice!
Leave the illogical touch now here now there
I' the way of work, the tantalising help
First to this, then the other opposite:
The blowing hot and cold, sham policy,
- 40 Sure ague of the mind and nothing more,
Disease of the perception or the will,
That fain would hide in a fine name!
Your choice,
Speak it out and condemn yourself there-
by!"

¹ "La Propriété, c'est le vol."

Well, Leicester-square is not the Residenz:
Instead of shrugging shoulder, turning
friend
The deaf ear, with a wink to the police —
I'll answer — by a question, wisdom's
mode.
How many years, o' the average, do men
Live in this world? Some score, say
computists.
Quintuple me that term and give mankind
The likely hundred, and with all my heart
I'll take your task upon me, work your way,
Concentrate energy on some one cause:
Since, counsellor, I also have my cause,
My flag, my faith in its effect, my hope
In its eventual triumph for the good
O' the world. And once upon a time,
when I
Was like all you, mere voice and nothing
more,
Myself took wings, soared sunward, and
thence sang
"Look where I live i' the loft, come up to
me,
Groundlings, nor grovel longer! gain this
height,
And prove you breathe here better than
below!
Why, what emancipation far and wide
Will follow in a trice! They too can soar,
Each tenant of the earth's circumference
Claiming to elevate humanity,
They also must attain such altitude,
Live in the luminous circle that surrounds
The planet, not the leaden orb itself.
Press out, each point, from surface to yon
verge
Which one has gained and guaranteed
your realm!"
Ay, still my fragments wander, music-
fraught,
Sighs of the soul, mine once, mine now, and
mine
For ever! Crumbled arch, crushed aque-
duct,
Alive with tremors in the shaggy growth
Of wild-wood, crevice-sown, that triumphs
there
Imparting exultation to the hills!
Sweep of the swathe when only the winds
walk
And waft my words above the grassy sea
Under the blinding blue that basks o'er
Rome, —
Hear ye not still — "Be Italy again"?
And ye, what strikes the panic to your
heart?
Decrepit council-chambers, — where some
lamp
Drives the unbroken black three paces off
From where the greybeards huddle in
debate,
Dim crows and capes, and midmost glim-
mers one

Like tarnished gold, and what they say is
doubt,
And what they think is fear, and what
suspends
The breath in them is not the plaster-patch
Time disengages from the painted wall
Where Rafael moulderingly bids adieu,
Nor tick of the insect turning tapestry
Which a queen's finger traced of old, to
dust;
But some word, resonant, redoubtable,
Of who once felt upon his head a hand
Whereof the head now apprehends his foot.
"Light in Rome, Law in Rome, and
Liberty
O' the soul in Rome — the free Church,
the free State!
Stamp out the nature that's best typified
By its embodiment in Peter's Dome,
The scorpion-body with the greedy pair
Of outstretched nippers, either colonnade
Agape for the advance of heads and
hearts!"
There's one cause for you! one and only
one,
For I am vocal through the universe,
I' the workshop, manufactory, exchange
And market-place, sea-port and custom-
house
O' the frontier: listen if the echoes die —
"Unfettered commerce! Power to speak
and hear,
And print and read! The universal vote!
Its rights for labour!" This, with much
beside,
I spoke when I was voice and nothing
more,
But altogether such an one as you
My censors. "Voice, and nothing more,
indeed!"
Re-echoes round me: "that's the censure,
there's
Involved the ruin of you soon or late!
Voice, — when its promise beat the empty
air:
And nothing more, — when solid earth's
your stage,
And we desiderate performance, deed
For word, the realising all you dreamed
In the old days: now, for deed, we find at
door
O' the council-chamber posted, mute as
mouse,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, sentry and safe-
guard
O' the greybeards all a-chuckle, cowl to
cape,
Who challenge Judas, — that's endear-
ment's style, —
To stop their mouths or let escape grimace,
While they keep cursing Italy and him.
The power to speak, hear, print and read is
ours?

Ay, we learn where and how, when clapped
inside
A convict-transport bound for cool Cay-
enne!
The universal vote we have: its urn,
We also have where votes drop, fingered-
o'er
By the universal Prefect. Say, Trade's
free
And Toil turned master out o' the slave it
was:
What then? These feed man's stomach,
but his soul
Craves finer fare, nor lives by bread alone, 50
As somebody says somewhere. Hence
you stand
Proved and recorded either false or weak,
Faulty in promise or performance: which?"
Neither, I hope. Once pedestalled on
earth,
To act not speak, I found earth was not
air.
I saw that multitude of mine, and not
The nakedness and nullity of air
Fit only for a voice to float in free.
Such eyes I saw that craved the light alone,
Such mouths that wanted bread and noth- 60
ing else,
Such hands that supplicated handiwork,
Men with the wives, and women with the
babes,
Yet all these pleading just to live, not die!
Did I believe one whit less in belief,
Take truth for falsehood, wish the voice
revoked
That told the truth to heaven for earth to
hear?
No, this should be, and shall; but when
and how?
At what expense to these who average
Your twenty years of life, my computists?
"Not bread alone" but bread before all 70
else
For these: the bodily want serve first, said
I;
If earth-space and the life-time help not
here,
Where is the good of body having been?
But, helping body, if we somewhat baulk
The soul of finer fare, such food's to find
Elsewhere and afterward — all indicates
Even this self-same fact that soul can
starve
Yet body still exist its twenty years:
While, stint the body, there's an end at
once
O' the revel in the fancy that Rome's free, 80
And superstition's fettered, and one
prints
Whate'er one pleases and who pleases
reads
The same, and speaks out and is spoken
to,

- And divers hundred thousand fools may
vote
A vote untampered with by one wise man,
And so elect Barabbas deputy
In lieu of his concurrent. I who trace
The purpose written on the face of
things,
For my behoof and guidance — (whoso
needs
No such sustainment, sees beneath my
signs,
Proves, what I take for writing, penman-
ship,
Scribble and flourish with no sense for me
O' the sort I solemnly go spelling out, —
Let him! there's certain work of mine to
show
Alongside his work: which gives warranty
Of shrewder vision in the workman —
judge!)
- I who trace Providence without a break
I' the plan of things, drop plumb on this
plain print
Of an intention with a view to good,
That man is made in sympathy with man
At outset of existence, so to speak;
But in dissociation, more and more,
Man from his fellow, as their lives ad-
vance
In culture; still humanity, that's born
A mass, keeps flying off, fining away
Ever into a multitude of points,
And ends in isolation, each from each:
Peerless above i' the sky, the pinnacle, —
Absolute contact, fusion, all below
At the base of being. How comes this
about?
- This stamp of God characterising man
And nothing else but man in the universe —
That, while he feels with man (to use man's
speech)
I' the little things of life, its fleshly wants
Of food and rest and health and happiness,
Its simplest spirit-motions, loves and hates,
Hopes, fears, soul-cravings on the ig-
noblest scale,
O' the fellow-creature, — owns the bond
at base, —
He tends to freedom and divergency
In the upward progress, plays the pin-
nacle
When life's at greatest (grant again the
phrase!
Because there's neither great nor small in
life).
- "Consult thou for thy kind that have the
eyes
To see, the mouths to eat, the hands to
work,
Men with the wives, and women with the
babes!"
Prompts Nature. "Care thou for thyself
alone
- I' the conduct of the mind God made thee
with!
Think, as if man had never thought be-
fore!
Act, as if all creation hung attent
On the acting of such faculty as thine,
To take prime pattern from thy master-
piece!"
Nature prompts also: neither law obeyed
To the uttermost by any heart and soul
We know or have in record: both of them
Acknowledged blindly by whatever man
We ever knew or heard of in this world.
"Will you have why and wherefore, and
the fact
Made plain as pikestaff?" modern Science
asks.
"That mass man sprung from was a jelly
lump
Once on a time; he kept an after course
Through fish and insect, reptile, bird and
beast,
Till he attained to be an ape at last
Or last but one. And if this doctrine
shock
In aught the natural pride" . . . Friend,
banish fear,
The natural humility replies!
Do you suppose, even I, poor potentate,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, who once ruled
the roast, —
I was born able at all points to ply
My tools? or did I have to learn my trade,
Practise as exile ere perform as prince?
The world knows something of my ups
and downs:
But grant me time, give me the manage-
ment
And manufacture of a model me,
Me fifty-fold, a prince without a flaw, —
Why, there's no social grade, the sordidest,
My embryo potentate should blink and
'scape.
King, all the better he was cobbler once,
He should know, sitting on the throne, how
tastes
Life to who sweeps the doorway. But
life's hard,
Occasion rare; you cut probation short,
And, being half-instructed, on the stage
You shuffle through your part as best you
can,
And bless your stars, as I do. God takes 8
time.
I like the thought He should have lodged
me once
I' the hole, the cave, the hut, the tene-
ment,
The mansion and the palace; made me
learn
The feel o' the first, before I found myself
Loftier i' the last, not more emancipate;
From first to last of lodging, I was I,

And not at all the place that harboured me.
 Do I refuse to follow farther yet
 I' the backwardness, repine if tree and
 flower,
 Mountain or streamlet were my dwelling-
 place
 Before I gained enlargement, grew mol-
 lusc?
 As well account that way for many a thrill
 Of kinship, I confess to, with the powers
 Called Nature: animate, inanimate,
 In parts or in the whole, there's some-
 thing there
 Man-like that somehow meets the man in
 me.
 My pulse seeks altogether with the heart
 O' the Persian, that old Xerxes, when he
 stayed
 His march to conquest of the world, a day
 I' the desert, for the sake of one superb
 Plane-tree which queened it there in soli-
 tude:
 Giving her neck its necklace, and each
 arm
 Its armlet, suiting soft waist, snowy side,
 With cincture and apparel. Yes, I lodged
 In those successive tenements; perchance
 Taste yet the straitness of them while I
 stretch
 Limb and enjoy new liberty the more.
 And some abodes are lost or ruinous;
 Some, patched-up and pieced-out, and so
 transformed
 They still accommodate the traveller
 His day of lifetime. O you count the
 links,
 Descry no bar of the unbroken man?
 Yes, — and who welds a lump of ore, sup-
 pose
 He likes to make a chain and not a bar,
 And reach by link on link, link small, link
 large,
 Out to the due length — why, there's fore-
 thought still
 Outside o' the series, forging at one end,
 While at the other there's — no matter
 what
 The kind of critical intelligence
 Believing that last link had last but one
 For parent, and no link was, first of all,
 Fitted to anvil, hammered into shape.
 Else, I accept the doctrine, and deduce
 This duty, that I recognise mankind,
 In all its height and depth and length and
 breadth.
 Mankind i' the main have little wants, not
 large:
 I, being of will and power to help, i' the
 main,
 Mankind, must help the least wants first.
 My friend,
 That is, my foe, without such power and
 will,
 May plausibly concentrate all he wields,

And do his best at helping some large want,
 Exceptionally noble cause, that's seen
 Subordinate enough from where I stand.
 As he helps, I' helped once, when like him-
 self,
 Unable to help better, work more wide;
 And so would work with heart and hand 50
 to-day,
 Did only computists confess a fault,
 And multiply the single score by five,
 Five only, give man's life its hundred years.
 Change life, in me shall follow change to
 match!
 Time were then, to work here, there, every-
 where,
 By turns and try experiment at ease!
 Full time to mend as well as mar: why
 wait
 The slow and sober uprising all around
 O' the building? Let us run up, right to
 roof,
 Some sudden marvel, piece of perfectness, 60
 And testify what we intend the whole!
 Is the world losing patience? "Wait!"
 say we:
 "There's time: no generation needs to die
 Unsolaced; you've a century in store!"
 But, no: I sadly let the voices wing
 Their way i' the upper vacancy, nor test
 Truth on this solid as I promised once.
 Well, and what is there to be sad about?
 The world's the world, life's life, and noth-
 ing else.
 'Tis part of life, a property to prize, 70
 That those o' the higher sort engaged i' the
 world,
 Should fancy they can change its ill to
 good,
 Wrong to right, ugliness to beauty: find
 Enough success in fancy turning fact,
 To keep the sanguine kind in counte-
 nance
 And justify the hope that busies them:
 Failure enough, — to who can follow
 change
 Beyond their vision, see new good prove ill
 I' the consequence, see blacks and whites
 of life
 Shift square indeed, but leave the chequered 80
 face
 Unchanged i' the main, — failure enough
 for such,
 To bid ambition keep the whole from
 change,
 As their best service. I hope nought be-
 side.
 No, my brave thinkers, whom I recognise,
 Gladly, myself the first, as, in a sense,
 All that our world's worth, flower and
 fruit of man!
 Such minds myself award supremacy
 Over the common insignificance,
 When only Mind's in question, — Body
 bows

- To quite another government, you know.
Be Kant crowned king o' the castle in the air!
- Hans Slouch, — his own, and children's mouths to feed
I' the hovel on the ground, — wants meat, nor chews
- "The Critique of Pure Reason" in exchange.
- But, now, — suppose I could allow your claims
- And quite change life to please you, — would it please?
- Would life comport with change and still be life?
- Ask, now, a doctor for a remedy:
- 10 There's his prescription. Bid him point you out
Which of the five or six ingredients saves
The sick man. "Such the efficacy?
Then why not dare and do things in one dose
Simple and pure, all virtue, no alloy
Of the idle drop and powder?" What's his word?
- The efficacy, neat, were neutralised:
It wants dispersing and retarding, — nay
Is put upon its mettle, plays its part
Precisely through such hindrance everywhere,
- 20 Finds some mysterious give and take i' the case,
Some gain by opposition, he foregoes
Should he unfetter the medicament.
So with this thought of yours that fain would work
Free in the world: it wants just what it finds —
The ignorance, stupidity, the hate,
Envy and malice and uncharitableness
That bar your passage, break the flow of you
Down from those happy heights where many a cloud
Combined to give you birth and bid you be
- 30 The royalist of rivers: on you glide
Silverly till you reach the summit-edge,
Then over, on to all that ignorance,
Stupidity, hate, envy, bluffs and blocks,
Posted to fret you into foam and noise.
What of it? Up you mount in minute mist,
And bridge the chasm that crushed your quietude,
A spirit-rainbow, earthborn jewelry
Outsparkling the insipid firmament
Blue above Terni and its orange-trees.
- 40 Do not mistake me! You, too, have your rights!
Hans must not burn Kant's house above his head
Because he cannot understand Kant's book:
- And still less must Hans' pastor burn Kant's self
Because Kant understands some books too well.
- But, justice seen to on this little point,
Answer me, is it manly, is it sage
To stop and struggle with arrangements here
It took so many lives, so much of toil,
To tinker up into efficiency?
Can't you contrive to operate at once, —
Since time is short and art is long, — to show
Your quality i' the world, whate'er you boast,
Without this fractious call on folks to crush
The world together just to set you free,
Admire the capers you will cut perchance,
Nor mind the mischief to your neighbours?
- "Age!
Age and experience bring discouragement,"
You taunt me: I maintain the opposite.
Am I discouraged who, — perceiving health,
Strength, beauty, as they tempt the eye of 6
soul,
Are uncombinable with flesh and blood, —
Resolve to let my body live its best,
And leave my soul what better yet may be
Or not be, in this life or afterward?
— In either fortune, wiser than who waits
Till magic art procure a miracle.
In virtue of my very confidence
Mankind ought to outgrow its babyhood,
I prescribe rocking, deprecate rough hands,
While thus the cradle holds it past mis- 7
take.
- Indeed, my task's the harder — equable
Sustainment everywhere, all strain, no push —
Whereby friends credit me with indolence,
Apathy, hesitation. "Stand stock-still
If able to move briskly? 'All a-strain' —
So must we compliment your passiveness?
Sound asleep, rather!"
- Just the judgment passed
Upon a statue, luckless like myself,
I saw at Rome once! 'Twas some artist's whim
To cover all the accessories close 8
I' the group, and leave you only Laocoön
With neither sons nor serpents to denote
The purpose of his gesture. Then a crowd
Was called to try the question, criticise
Wherefore such energy of legs and arms,
Nay, eyeballs, starting from the socket.
One —
I give him leave to write my history —
Only one said "I think the gesture strives

Against some obstacle we cannot see."
 All the rest made their minds up. "'Tis a
 yawn
 Of sheer fatigue subsiding to repose:
 The statue's 'Somnolency' clear enough!"

There, my arch stranger-friend, my audi-
 ence both
 And arbitress, you have one half your wish,
 At least: you know the thing I tried to do!
 All, so far, to my praise and glory — all
 Told as befits the self-apologist, —
 Who ever promises a candid sweep
 And clearance of those errors miscalled
 crimes
 None knows more, none laments so much
 as he,
 And ever rises from confession, proved
 A god whose fault was — trying to be man.
 Just so, fair judge, — if I read smile
 aright —
 I condescend to figure in your eyes
 As biggest heart and best of Europe's
 friends,
 And hence my failure. God will estimate
 Success one day; and, in the mean time —
 you!

I dare say there's some fancy of the sort
 Frolicking round this final puff I send
 To die up yonder in the ceiling-rose, —
 Some consolation-stakes, we losers win!
 A plague of the return to "I — I — I
 Did this, meant that, hoped, feared the
 other thing!"

Autobiography, adieu! The rest
 Shall make amends, be pure blame, history
 And falsehood: not the ineffective truth,
 But Thiers-and-Victor-Hugo exercise.
 Hear what I never was, but might have
 been
 I' the better world where goes tobacco-
 smoke!

Here lie the dozen volumes of my life:
 (Did I say "lie"? the pregnant word will
 serve).

Cut on to the concluding chapter, though!
 Because the little hours begin to strike.
 Hurry Thiers-Hugo to the labour's end!

Something like this the unwritten chapter
 reads.

Exemplify the situation thus!
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau, being, no dispute,
 Absolute mistress, chose the Assembly first,
 To serve her: chose this man, its President
 Afterward, to serve also, — specially
 To see that folk did service one and all.
 And now the proper term of years was out
 When the Head-servant must vacate his
 place,

And nothing lay so patent to the world
 As that his fellow-servants one and all

Were — mildly to make mention — knaves
 or fools,
 Each of them with his promise flourished
 full

I' the face of you by word and impudence, 5c
 Or filtered slyly out by nod and wink
 And nudge upon your sympathetic rib —
 That not one minute more did knave or
 fool

Mean to keep faith and serve as he had
 sworn

Hohenstiel-Schwangau, once her Head
 away.

Why should such swear except to get the
 chance,

When time should ripen and confusion
 bloom,

Of putting Hohenstielers-Schwangauese
 To the true use of human property —

Restoring souls and bodies, this to Pope, 6c
 And that to King, that other to his planned

Perfection of a Share-and-share-alike,
 That other still, to Empire absolute

In shape of the Head-servant's very self
 Transformed to Master whole and sole?
 each scheme

Discussible, concede one circumstance —
 That each scheme's parent were, beside
 himself,

Hohenstiel-Schwangau, not her serving-
 man

Sworn to do service in the way she chose
 Rather than his way: way superlative, 7c

Only, — by some infatuation, — his
 And his and his and everyone's but hers
 Who stuck to just the Assembly and the
 Head.

I make no doubt the Head, too, had his
 dream

Of doing sudden duty swift and sure
 On all that heap of untrustworthiness —
 Catching each vaunter of the villany
 He meant to perpetrate when time was
 ripe,

Once the Head-servant fairly out of
 doors, —

And, caging here a knave and there a fool, 8c
 Cry "Mistress of your servants, these and
 me,

Hohenstiel-Schwangau! I, their trusty
 Head,

Pounce on a pretty scheme concocting here
 That's stopped, extinguished by my vigi-
 lance.

Your property is safe again: but mark!
 Safe in these hands, not yours, who lavish
 trust

Too lightly. Leave my hands their charge
 awhile!

I know your business better than yourself:
 Let me alone about it! Some fine day,

Once we are rid of the embarrassment, 9c
 You shall look up and see your longing
 crowned!"

Such fancy might have tempted him be
false,
But this man chose truth and was wiser so.
He recognised that for great minds i' the
world
There is no trial like the appropriate one
Of leaving little minds their liberty
Of littleness to blunder on through life,
Now, aiming at right ends by foolish
means,
Now, at absurd achievement through the
aid
Of good and wise endeavour — to ac-
quiesce
10 In folly's life-long privilege, though with
power
To do the little minds the good they need,
Despite themselves, by just abolishing
Their right to play the part and fill the
place
I' the scheme of things He schemed who
made alike
Great minds and little minds, saw use for
each.
Could the orb sweep those puny particles
I just half lights at distance, hardly leads
I' the leash — sweep out each speck of
them from space
They anticise in with their days and
nights
20 And whirlings round and dancings off, for-
sooth,
And all that fruitless individual life
One cannot lend a beam to but they
spoil —
Sweep them into itself and so, one star,
Preponderate henceforth i' the heritage
Of heaven! No! in less senatorial phrase,
The man endured to help, not save out-
right
The multitude by substituting him
For them, his knowledge, will and way, for
God's:
Nor change the world, such as it is, and
was
30 And will be, for some other, suiting all
Except the purpose of the maker. No!
He saw that weakness, wickedness will be,
And therefore should be: that the perfect
man
As we account perfection — at most pure
O' the special gold, whate'er the form it
take,
Head-work or heart-work, fined and thrice-
refined
I' the crucible of life, whereto the powers
Of the refiner, one and all, are flung
To feed the flame, he saw that e'en the
block
40 Such perfect man holds out triumphant,
breaks
Into some poisonous ore, gold's opposite,
At the very purest, so compensating
Man's Adversary — what if we believe? —

For earlier stern exclusion of his stuff.
See the sage, with the hunger for the
truth,
And see his system that's all true, except
The one weak place that's stanchioned by
a lie!
The moralist who walks with head erect
I' the crystal clarity of air so long,
Until a stumble, and the man's one mire!
Philanthropy undoes the social knot
With axe-edge, makes love room 'twixt
head and trunk:
Religion — but, enough, the thing's too
clear!
Well, if these sparks break out i' the green-
est tree,
Our topmost of performance, yours and
mine,
What will be done i' the dry ineptitude
Of ordinary mankind, bark and bole,
All seems ashamed of but their mother-
earth?
Therefore throughout Head's term of
servitude
He did the appointed service, and forbore
Extraneous action that were duty else,
Done by some other servant, idle now
Or mischievous: no matter, each his own —
Own task, and, in the end, own praise or
blame!
He suffered them strut, prate and brag
their best,
Squabble at odds on every point save one,
And there shake hands, — agree to trifle
time,
Obstruct advance with, each, his cricket-
cry
"Wait till the Head be off the shoulders
here!
Then comes my King, my Pope, my Auto-
crat,
My Socialist Republic to her own —
To-wit, that property of only me,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau who conceits her-
self
Free, forsooth, and expects I keep her
so!"
— Nay, suffered when, perceiving with
dismay
Head's silence paid no tribute to their
noise,
They turned on him. "Dumb menace in
that mouth,
Malice in that unstridulosity!
He cannot but intend some stroke of state
Shall signalise his passage into peace
Out of the creaking, — hinder transference
O' the Hohenstiellers-Schwangauese to king,
Pope, autocrat, or socialist republic!
That's
Exact the cause his lips unlocked would
cry!
Therefore be stirring: brave, beard, bully
him!

Dock, by the million, of its friendly joints,
 The electoral body short at once! who
 did,
 May do again, and undo us beside.
 Wrest from his hands the sword for self-
 defence,
 The right to parry any thrust in play
 We peradventure please to meditate!"
 And so forth; creak, creak, creak: and
 ne'er a line
 His locked mouth oped the wider, till at
 last
 O' the long degraded and insulting day,
 Sudden, the clock told it was judgment-
 time
 Then he addressed himself to speak in-
 deed
 To the fools, not knaves: they saw him
 walk straight down
 Each step of the eminence, as he first
 engaged,
 And stand at last o' the level, — all he
 swore.
 "People, and not the people's varletry,
 This is the task you set myself and these!
 Thus I performed my part of it, and thus
 They thwarted me throughout, here, here,
 and here:
 Study each instance! yours the loss, not
 mine.
 What they intend now is demonstrable
 As plainly: here's such man, and here's
 such mode
 Of making you some other than the thing
 You, wisely or unwisely, choose to be,
 And only set him up to keep you so.
 Do you approve this? Yours the loss, not
 mine.
 Do you condemn it? There's a remedy.
 Take me — who know your mind, and
 mean your good,
 With clearer brain and stouter arm than
 they,
 Or you, or haply anybody else —
 And make me master for the moment!
 Choose
 What time, what power you trust me with:
 I too
 Will choose as frankly ere I trust myself
 With time and power: they must be ade-
 quate
 To the end and aim, since mine the loss,
 with yours,
 If means be wanting; once their worth ap-
 proved,
 Grant them, and I shall forthwith oper-
 ate —
 Ponder it well! — to the extremest stretch
 O' the power you trust me: if with unsuc-
 cess,
 God wills it, and there's nobody to blame."
 Whereon the people answered with a
 shout

"The trusty one! no tricksters any more!"
 How could they other? He was in his
 place.

What followed? Just what he foresaw,
 what proved
 The soundness of both judgments, — his,
 o' the knaves
 And fools, each trickster with his dupe, —
 and theirs,
 The people's, in what head and arm
 could help.
 There was uprising, masks dropped, flags
 unfurled,
 Weapons outflourished in the wind, my
 faith!
 Heavily did he let his fist fall plumb
 On each perturber of the public peace, 50
 No matter whose the wagging head it
 broke —
 From bald-pate craft and greed and impu-
 dence
 Of night-hawk at first chance to prowl and
 prey
 For glory and a little gain beside,
 Passing for eagle in the dusk of the
 age, —
 To florid head-top, foamy patriotism
 And tribunitary daring, breast laid bare
 Thro' confidence in rectitude, with hand
 On private pistol in the pocket: these
 And all the dupes of these, who lent them- 60
 selves
 As dust and feather do, to help offence
 O' the wind that whirls them at you, then
 subsides
 In safety somewhere, leaving filth afloat,
 Annoyance you may brush from eyes and
 beard, —
 These he stopped: bade the wind's spite
 howl or whine
 Its worst outside the building, wind con-
 ceives
 Meant to be pulled together and become
 Its natural playground so. What foolish-
 ness
 Of dust or feather proved importunate
 And fell 'twixt thumb and finger, found 70
 them gripe
 To detriment of bulk and buoyancy.
 Then followed silence and submission.
 Next,
 The inevitable comment came on work
 And work's cost: he was censured as pro-
 fuse
 Of human life and liberty: too swift
 And thorough his procedure, who had
 lagged
 At the outset, lost the opportunity
 Through timid scruples as to right and
 wrong.
 "There's no such certain mark of a small
 mind"
 (So did Sagacity explain the fault)

"As when it needs must square away and
sink

To its own small dimensions, private scale
Of right and wrong, — humanity i' the
large,

The right and wrong of the universe, for-
sooth!

This man addressed himself to guard and
guide

Hohenstiel-Schwangau. When the case
demands

He frustrate villany in the egg, unhatched,
With easy stamp and minimum of pang
E'en to the punished reptile, 'There's my
oath

10 Restrains my foot,' objects our guide and
guard,

'I must leave guardianship and guidance
now:

Rather than stretch one handbreadth of the
law,

I am bound to see it break from end to end.
First show me death i' the body politic:

Then prescribe pill and potion, what may
please

Hohenstiel-Schwangau! all is for her sake:
'Twas she ordained my service should be
so.

What if the event demonstrate her unwise,
If she unwill the thing she willed before?

20 I hold to the letter and obey the bond
And leave her to perdition loyally.'

Whence followed thrice the expenditure we
blame

Of human life and liberty: for want
O' the by-blow, came deliberate butcher's-

work!"

"Elsewhere go carry your complaint!"
bade he.

"Least, largest, there's one law for all the
minds,

Here or above: be true at any price!
'Tis just o' the great scale, that such happy

stroke
Of falsehood would be found a failure.

Truth

10 Still stands unshaken at her base by me,
Reigns paramount i' the world, for the large

good
O' the long late generations, — I and you
Forgotten like this buried foolishness!

Not so the good I rooted in its grave."

This is why he refused to break his oath,
Rather appealed to the people, gained the

power
To act as he thought best, then used it,
once

For all, no matter what the consequence
To knaves and fools. As thus began his

sway,

15 So, through its twenty years, one rule of
right

afflicted him: govern for the many first,

The poor mean multitude, all mouths and
eyes:

Bid the few, better favoured in the brain,
Be patient nor presume on privilege,
Help him or else be quiet, — never crave

That he help them, — increase, forsooth,
the gulf

Yawning so terribly 'twixt mind and mind
I' the world here, which his purpose was to

block
At bottom, were it by an inch, and bridge,
If by a filament, no more, at top.

Equalise things a little! And the way
He took to work that purpose out, was

plain
Enough to intellect and honesty
And — superstition, style it if you please,

So long as you allow there was no lack
O' the quality imperative in man —

Reverence. You see deeper? thus saw
he,

And by the light he saw, must walk: how
else

Was he to do his part? a man's, with
might

And main, and not a faintest touch of fear,
Sure he was in the hand of God who comes
Before and after, with a work to do

Which no man helps nor hinders. Thus
the man, —

So timid when the business was to touch
The uncertain order of humanity,

Imperil, for a problematic cure
Of grievance on the surface, any good

I' the deep of things, dim yet discernible —
This same man, so irresolute before,

Show him a true excrescence to cut sheer,
A devil's-graft on God's foundation-stock,

Then — no complaint of indecision more!
He wrenched out the whole canker, root

and branch,
Deaf to who cried that earth would tumble

in
At its four corners if he touched a twig.

Witness that lie of lies, arch-infamy,
When the Republic, with her life in-

olved
In just this law — "Each people rules it-

self
Its own way, not as any stranger please" —

Turned, and for first proof she was living,
bade

Hohenstiel-Schwangau fasten on the throat
Of the first neighbour that claimed benefit

O' the law herself established: "Hohen-
stiel

For Hohenstiellers! Rome, by parity
Of reasoning, for Romans? That's a

jest
Wants proper treatment, — lancet-punc-

ture suits
The proud flesh: Rome ape Hohenstiel

forsooth!"

And so the siege and slaughter and success

Whereof we nothing doubt that Hohenstiel
 Will have to pay the price, in God's good
 time
 Which does not always fall on Saturday
 When the world looks for wages. Any-
 how,
 He found this infamy triumphant. Well:
 Sagacity suggested, make this speech!
 "The work was none of mine: suppose
 wrong wait,
 Stand over for redressing? Mine for me,
 My predecessors' work on their own head!
 Meantime there's plain advantage, should
 we leave
 Things as we find them. Keep Rome
 manacled
 Hand and foot: no fear of unruliness!
 Her foes consent to even seem our friends
 So long, no longer. Then, there's glory
 got
 By boldness and bravado to the world:
 The disconcerted world must grin and
 bear
 The old saucy writing, 'Grunt thereat who
 may,
 So shall things be, for such my pleasure
 is —
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau's.' How that reads
 in Rome
 O' the Capitol where Brennus broke his
 pate,
 And lends a flourish to our journalists!"
 Only, it was nor read nor flourished of,
 Since, not a moment did such glory stay
 Excision of the canker! Out it came,
 Root and branch, with much roaring, and
 some blood,
 And plentiful abuse of him from friend
 And foe. Who cared? Not Nature who
 assuaged
 The pain and set the patient on his legs
 Promptly: the better! had it been the
 worse,
 'Tis Nature you must try conclusions with,
 Not he, since nursing canker kills the sick
 For certain, while to cut may cure, at
 least.
 "Ah," groaned a second time Sagacity,
 "Again the little mind, precipitate,
 Rash, rude, when even in the right, as here!
 The great mind knows the power of gentle-
 ness,
 Only tries force because persuasion fails.
 Had this man, by prelusive trumpet-blast,
 Signified 'Truth and Justice mean to
 come,
 Nay, fast approach your threshold! Ere
 they knock,
 See that the house be set in order, swept
 And garnished, windows shut, and doors
 thrown wide!
 The free State comes to visit the free
 Church:

Receive her! or . . . or . . . never mind
 what else!"
 Thus moral suasion heralding brute force,
 How had he seen the old abuses die,
 And new life kindle here, there, every-
 where,
 Roused simply by that mild yet potent
 spell —
 Beyond or beat of drum or stroke of
 sword —
 Public opinion!"

50

"How, indeed?" he asked,
 "When all to see, after some twenty years,
 Were your own fool-face waiting for the
 sight,
 Faced by as wide a grin from ear to ear
 O' the knaves who, while the fools were
 waiting, worked —
 Broke yet another generation's heart —
 Twenty years' respite helping! Teach
 your nurse
 'Compliance with, before you suck, the
 teat!'
 Find what that means, and meanwhile hold
 your tongue!"
 Whereof the war came which he knew
 must be.
 Now, this had proved the dry-rot of the 60
 race
 He ruled o'er, that, i' the old day, when
 was need
 They fought for their own liberty and life,
 Well did they fight, none better: whence,
 such love
 Of fighting somehow still for fighting's sake
 Against no matter whose the liberty
 And life, so long as self-conceit should crow
 And clap the wing, while justice sheathed
 her claw, —
 That what had been the glory of the world
 When thereby came the world's good,
 grew its plague
 Now that the champion-armour, donned to 70
 dare
 The dragon once, was clattered up and
 down
 Highway and by-path of the world at peace,
 Merely to mask marauding, or for sake
 O' the shine and rattle that apprised the
 fields
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau was a fighter yet,
 And would be, till the weary world sup-
 pressed
 Her peccant humours out of fashion now.
 Accordingly the world spoke plain at last,
 Promised to punish who next played with fire.
 So, at his advent, such discomfiture
 Taking its true shape of beneficence,
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau, half-sad and part-
 wise,

80

Sat: if with wistful eye reverting oft
 To each pet weapon, rusty on its peg,
 Yet, with a sigh of satisfaction too
 That, peacefulness become the law, her-
 self
 Got the due share of godsend in its train,
 Cried shame and took advantage quietly.
 Still, so the dry-rot had been nursed into
 Blood, bones and marrow, that, from
 worst to best,
 All, — clearest brains and soundest hearts
 save here,
 10 All had this lie acceptable for law
 Plain as the sun at noonday — "War is
 best,
 Peace is worst; peace we only tolerate
 As needful preparation for new war:
 War may be for whatever end we will —
 Peace only as the proper help thereto.
 Such is the law of right and wrong for us
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau: for the other
 world,
 As naturally, quite another law.
 Are we content? The world is satisfied.
 20 Discontent? Then the world must give
 us leave
 To strike right, left, and exercise our arm
 Torpid of late through overmuch repose,
 And show its strength is still superlative
 At somebody's expense in life or limb:
 Which done, — let peace succeed and last
 a year!"
 Such devil's-doctrine so was judged God's
 law,
 We say, when this man stepped upon the
 stage,
 That it had seemed a venial fault at most
 Had he once more obeyed Sagacity.
 30 "You come i' the happy interval of peace,
 The favourable weariness from war:
 Prolong it! artfully, as if intent
 On ending peace as soon as possible.
 Quietly so increase the sweets of ease
 And safety, so employ the multitude,
 Put hod and trowel so in idle hands,
 So stuff and stop up wagging jaws with
 bread,
 That selfishness shall surreptitiously
 Do wisdom's office, whisper in the ear
 40 Of Hohenstiel-Schwangau, there's a pleas-
 ant feel
 In being gently forced down, pinioned fast
 To the easy arm-chair by the pleading
 arms
 O' the world beseeching her to there abide
 Content with all the harm done hitherto,
 And let herself be petted in return,
 Free to re-wage, in speech and prose and
 verse,
 The old unjust wars, nay — in verse and
 prose
 And speech, — to vaunt new victories shall
 prove

A plague o' the future, — so that words
 suffice
 For present comfort, and no deeds denote
 That — tired of illimitable line on line
 Of boulevard-building, tired o' the theatre
 With the tuneless thousand in their thrones
 above,
 For glory of the male intelligence,
 And Nakedness in her due niche below,
 For illustration of the female use —
 That she, 'twixt yawn and sigh, prepares to
 slip
 Out of the arm-chair, wants fresh blood
 again
 From over the boundary, to colour-up
 The sheeny sameness, keep the world aware
 Hohenstiel-Schwangau's arm needs exer-
 cise
 Despite the petting of the universe!
 Come, you're a city-builder: what's the
 way
 Wisdom takes when time needs that she
 entice
 Some fierce tribe, castled on the mountain-
 peak,
 Into the quiet and amenity
 O' the meadow-land below? By crying
 'Done
 With fight now, down with fortress?'
 Rather — 'Dare
 On, dare ever, not a stone displace!'
 Cries Wisdom: 'Cradle of our ancestors,
 Be bulwark, give our children safety still!
 Who of our children please may stoop and
 taste
 O' the valley-fatness, unafraid, — for why?
 At first alarm they have thy mother-ribs
 To run upon for refuge: foes forget
 Scarcely that Terror on her vantage-coign,
 Couchant supreme among the powers of
 air,
 Watches — prepared to pounce — the
 country wide!
 Meanwhile the encouraged valley holds its
 own,
 From the first hut's adventure in descent, 8
 Half home, half hiding place, — to dome
 and spire
 Befitting the assured metropolis:
 Nor means offence to the fort which caps
 the crag,
 All undismantled of a turret-stone,
 And bears the banner-pole that creaks at
 times
 Embarrassed by the old emblazonment,
 When festal days are to commemorate:
 Otherwise left untenanted, no doubt,
 Since, never fear, our myriads from below
 Would rush, if needs were, man the walls 94
 again,
 Renew the exploits of the earlier time
 At moment's notice! But till notice sound,
 Inhabit we in ease and opulence!'

And so, till one day thus a notice sounds,
Not trumpeted, but in a whisper-gust
Fitfully playing through mute city streets
At midnight weary of day's feast and
game —

'Friends, your famed fort's a ruin past re-
pair!

Its use is — to proclaim it had a use
Obsolete long since. Climb and study
there

How to paint barbican and battlement
I' the scenes of our new theatre! We fight
Now — by forbidding neighbours to sell
steel

Or buy wine, not by blowing out their
brains!

Moreover, while we let time sap the strength
O' the walls omnipotent in menace once,
Neighbours would seem to have prepared
surprise —

Run up defences in a mushroom-growth,
For all the world like what we boasted:
brief —

Hohenstiel-Schwangau's policy is peace!"

Ay, so Sagacity advised him filch
Folly from fools: handsomely substitute
o The dagger o' lath, while gay they sang and
danced,

For that long dangerous sword they liked
to feel,

Even at feast-time, clink and make friends
start.

No! he said "Hear the truth, and bear the
truth,

And bring the truth to bear on all you are
And do, assured that only good comes
thence

Whate'er the shape good take! While I
have rule,

Understand! — war for war's sake, war
for sake

O' the good war gets you as war's soul
excuse,

Is damnable and damned shall be. You
want

30 Glory? Why so do I, and so does God.
Where is it found, — in this paraded
shame, —

One particle of glory? Once you warred
For liberty against the world, and won:
There was the glory. Now, you fain would
war

Because the neighbour prospers over-
much, —

Because there has been silence half-an-
hour,

Like Heaven on earth, without a cannon-
shot

Announcing Hohenstiellers-Schwangaese
Are minded to disturb the jubilee, —

40 Because the loud tradition echoes faint,
And who knows but posterity may doubt

If the great deeds were ever done at all,
Much less believe, were such to do again,
So the event would follow: therefore, prove
The old power, at the expense of some-
body!

Oh Glory, — gilded bubble, bard and sage
So nickname rightly, — would thy dance
endure

One moment, would thy vaunting make
believe

Only one eye thy ball was solid gold,
Hadst thou less breath to buoy thy vacancy 50
Than a whole multitude expends in praise,
Less range for roaming than from head
to head

Of a whole people? Flit, fall, fly again,
Only, fix never where the resolute hand
May prick thee, prove the glassy lie thou
art!

Give me real intellect to reason with,
No multitude, no entity that apes
One wise man, being but a million fools!
How and whence wishest glory, thou wise
one?

Wouldst get it, — didst thyself guide 60
Providence, —

By stinting of his due each neighbour round
In strength and knowledge and dexterity
So as to have thy littleness grow large
By all those somethings once, turned
nothings now,

As children make a molehill mountainous
By scooping out a trench around their pile,
And saving so the mudwork from approach?
Quite otherwise the cheery game of life,
True yet mimetic warfare, whereby man
Does his best with his utmost, and so ends 70
A victor most of all in fair defeat.

Who thinks, — would he have no one think
beside?

Who knows, who does, — save his must
learning die

And action cease? Why, so our giant
proves

No better than a dwarf, once rivalry
Prostrate around him. Let the whole race
stand

For him to try conclusions fairly with!
Show me the great man would engage his
peer

Rather by grinning 'Cheat, thy gold is
brass!'

Than granting 'Perfect piece of purest ore! 80
Still, is it less good mintage, this of mine?'
Well, and these right and sound results of
soul

I' the strong and healthy one wise man, —
shall such

Be vainly sought for, scornfully renounced
I' the multitude that make the entity —

The people? — to what purpose, if no less,
In power and purity of soul, below

The reach of the unit than, by multiplied

Might of the body, vulgarised the more,
Above, in thick and threefold brutishness?
See! you accept such one wise man, my-
self:

Wiser or less wise, still I operate
From my own stock of wisdom, nor exact
Of other sort of natures you admire,
That whoso rhymes a sonnet pays a tax,
Who paints a landscape dips brush at his
cost,

Who scores a septett true for strings and
wind

10 Multcted must be — else how should I
impose

Properly, attitudinise aright,
Did such conflicting claims as these divert
Hohenstiel Schwangau from observing me?
Therefore, what I find facile, you be sure,
With effort or without it, you shall dare —
You, I aspire to make my better self
And truly the Great Nation. No more
war

For war's sake, then! and, — seeing,
wickedness

Springs out of folly, — no more foolish
dread

20 O' the neighbour waxing too inordinate
A rival, through his gain of wealth and ease!
What? — keep me patient, Powers! —
the people here,

Earth presses to her heart, nor owns a pride
Above her pride i' the race all flame and
air

And aspiration to the boundless Great,
The incommensurably Beautiful —
Whose very falterings groundward come
of flight

Urged by a pinion all too passionate
For heaven and what it holds of gloom and
glow:

30 Bravest of thinkers, bravest of the brave
Doers, exalt in Science, rapturous
In Art, the — more than all — magnetic
race

To fascinate their fellows, mould mankind
Hohenstiel - Schwangau - fashion, — these,
what? — these

Will have to abdicate their primacy
Should such a nation sell them steel un-
taxed,

And such another take itself, on hire
For the natural se'nnight, somebody for
lord

Unpatronised by me whose back was
turned?

40 Or such another yet would fain build
bridge,

Lay rail, drive tunnel, busy its poor self
With its appropriate fancy: so there's —
flash —

Hohenstiel-Schwangau up in arms at once!
Genius has somewhat of the infantine:
But of the childish, not a touch nor taint

Except through self-will, which, being
foolishness,

Is certain, soon or late, of punishment
Which Providence avert! — and that it
may

Avert what both of us would so deserve
No foolish dread o' the neighbour, I enjoin!
By consequence, no wicked war with him,
While I rule!

“Does that mean — no war at all
When just the wickedness I here proscribe
Comes, haply, from the neighbour? Does
my speech

Precede the praying that you beat the
sword

To ploughshare, and the spear to pruning-
hook,

And sit down henceforth under your own
vine

And fig-tree through the sleepy summer
month,

Letting what hurly-burly please explode
On the other side the mountain-frontier? (

No,
Beloved! I foresee and I announce
Necessity of warfare in one case,
For one cause: one way, I bid broach the
blood

O' the world. For truth and right, and
only right

And truth, — right, truth, on the absolute
scale of God,

No pettiness of man's admeasurement, —
In such case only, and for such one cause,
Fight your hearts out, whatever fate betide
Hands energetic to the uttermost!

Lie not! Endure no lie which needs your ?
heart

And hand to push it out of mankind's
path —

No lie that lets the natural forces work
Too long ere lay it plain and pulverised —
Seeing man's life lasts only twenty years!

And such a lie, before both man and God,
Proving, at this time, present, Austria's rule
O'er Italy, — for Austria's sake the first
Italy's next, and our sake last of all,
Come with me and deliver Italy!

Smite hip and thigh until the oppressor ?
leave

Free from the Adriatic to the Alps
The oppressed one! We were they who
laid her low

In the old bad day when Villany braved
Truth

And Right and laughed 'Henceforward,
God deposed,

Satan we set to rule for evermore
I' the world!' — whereof to stop the conse-
quence,

And for atonement of false glory there
Gaped at and gabbled over by the world

I purpose to get God enthroned again
For what the world will gird at as sheer
shame
I' the cost of blood and treasure. 'All
for nought —

Not even, say, some patch of province,
splice

O' the frontier? — some snug honcrarium-
fee

Shut into glove and pocketed apace?"

(Questions Sagacity) 'in deference

To the natural susceptibility

Of folks at home, unwitting of that pitch

o You soar to, and misdoubting if Truth,
Right

And the other such augustnesses repay

Expenditure in coin o' the realm, — but
prompt

To recognise the cession of Savoy

And Nice as marketable value! No,

Sagacity, go preach to Metternich,

And, sermon ended, stay where he resides!

Hohenstiel-Schwangau, you and I must
march

The other road! war for the hate of war,
Not love, this once!" So Italy was free.

20 What else noteworthy and commendable
I' the man's career? — that he was resolute

No trepidation, much less treachery

On his part, should imperil from its poise

The ball o' the world, heaved up at such
expense

Of pains so far, and ready to rebound,

Let but a finger maladroitly fall,

Under pretence of making fast and sure

The inch gained by late volubility,

And run itself back to the ancient rest

30 At foot o' the mountain. Thus he ruled,
gave proof

The world had gained a point, progressive
so,

By choice, this time, as will and power con-
curred,

O' the fittest man to rule; not chance of
birth,

Or such-like dice-throw. Oft Sagacity

Was at his ear: "Confirm this clear ad-
vance,

Support this wise procedure! You, elect

O' the people, mean to justify their choice

And out-king all the kingly imbeciles;

But that's just half the enterprise: remains

40 You find them a successor like yourself,
In head and heart and eye and hand and
aim,

Or all done's undone; and whom hope to

mould

So like you as the pupil Nature sends,

The son and heir's completeness which you

lack?

Lack it no longer! Wed the pick o' the

world.

30

Where'er you think you find it. Should
she be

A queen, — tell Hohenstielers-Schwan-
gauese

'So do the old enthroned decrepitudes

Acknowledge, in the rotten hearts of them,
Their knell is knolled, they hasten to make 54

peace

With the new order, recognise in me

Your right to constitute what king you will,

Cringe therefore crown in hand and bride

on arm,

To both of us: we triumph, I suppose!"

Is it the other sort of rank? — bright eye,

Soft smile, and so forth, all her queenly

boast?

Undaunted the exordium — "I, the man

O' the people, with the people mate myself:

So stand, so fall. Kings, keep your crowns

and brides!

Our progeny (if Providence agree) 60

Shall live to tread the baubles underfoot

And bid the scarecrows consort with their

kin.

For son, as for his sire, be the free wife

In the free state!"

That is, Sagacity

Would prop up one more lie, the most of all

Pernicious fancy that the son and heir

Receives the genius from the sire, himself

Transmits as surely, — ask experience else!

Which answers, — never was so plain a

truth

As that God drops his seed of heavenly 70

flame

Just where He wills on earth: sometimes

where man

Seems to tempt — such the accumulated

store

Of faculties — one spark to fire the heap;

Sometimes where, fire ball like, it falls

upon

The naked unpreparedness of rock,

Burns, beaconing the nations through their

night.

Faculties, fuel for the flame? All helps

Come, ought to come, or come not, crossed

by chance,

From culture and transmission. What's

your want

I' the son and heir? Sympathy, aptitude, 80

Teachableness, the fuel for the flame?

You'll have them for your pains: but the

flame's self,

The novel thought of God shall light the

world?

No, poet, though your offspring rhyme and

chime

I' the cradle, — painter, no, for all your

pet

Draws his first eye, beats Salvatore's boy, —

And thrice no, statesman, should your

progeny

- Tie bib and tucker with no tape but red,
And made a foolscap kite of protocols!
Critic and copyist and bureaucrat
To heart's content! The seed o' the apple
tree
Brings forth another tree which bears a
crab:
'Tis the great gardener grafts the excellence
On wildings when he will.
- "How plain I view,
Across those misty years 'twixt me and
Rome" —
(Such the man's answer to Sagacity)
10 "The little wayside temple, half-way down
To a mild river that makes oxen white
Miraculously, un-mouse-colours skin,
Or so the Roman country people dream!
I view that sweet small shrub-embedded
shrine
On the declivity, was sacred once
To a transmuting Genius of the land,
Could touch and turn its dunnest natures
bright,
— Since Italy means the Land of the Ox,
we know.
Well, how was it the due succession fell
20 From priest to priest who ministered i'
the cool
Calm fane o' the Clitumnian god? The
sire
Brought forth a son and sacerdotal sprout,
Endowed instinctively with good and grace
To suit the gliding gentleness below —
Did he? Tradition tells another tale.
Each priest obtained his predecessor's staff,
Robe, fillet and insignia, blamelessly,
By springing out of ambush, soon or late,
And slaying him: the initiative rite
30 Simply was murder, save that murder took,
I' the case, another and religious name.
So it was once, is now, shall ever be
With genius and its priesthood in this
world;
The new power slays the old — but hand-
somely.
There he lies, not diminished by an inch
Of stature that he graced the altar with,
Though somebody of other bulk and build
Cries 'What a goodly personage lies here
Reddening the water where the bulrush
roots!
40 May I conduct the service in his place,
Decently and in order, as did he,
And, as he did not, keep a wary watch
When meditating 'neath yon willow shade!
Find out your best man, sure the son of him
Will prove best man again, and better still
Somehow than best, the grandson-prodigy!
You think the world would last another
day
Did we so make us masters of the trick
Whereby the works go, we could pre-ar-
range
- Their play and reach perfection when we 50
please?
Depend on it, the change and the surprise
Are part o' the plan: 'tis we wish steadiness;
Nature prefers a motion by unrest,
Advancement through this force which
jostles that.
And so, since much remains i' the world
to see,
Here's the world still, affording God the
sight."
Thus did the man refute Sagacity
Ever at this old whisper in his ear:
"Here are you picked out, by a miracle,
And placed conspicuously enough, folks say 60
And you believe, by Providence outright
Taking a new way — nor without success —
To put the world upon its mettle: good!
But Fortune alternates with Providence;
Resource is soon exhausted. Never count
On such a happy hit occurring twice!
Try the old method next time!"
- "Old enough,"
(At whisper in his ear, the laugh outbroke)
"And mode the most discredited of all,
By just the men and women who make 70
boast
They are kings and queens thereby! Mere
self-defence
Should teach them, on one chapter of the
law
Must be no sort of trifling — chastity:
They stand or fall, as their progenitors
Were chaste or unchaste. Now, run eye
around
My crowned acquaintance, give each life
its look
And no more, — why, you'd think each
life was led
Purposely for example of what pains
Who leads it took to cure the prejudice,
And prove there's nothing so unproveable 80
As who is who, what son of what a sire,
And, — inferentially, — how faint the
chance
That the next generation needs to fear
Another fool o' the selfsame type as he
Happily regnant now by right divine
And luck o' the pillow! No: select your
lord
By the direct employment of your brains
As best you may, — bad as the blunder
prove,
A far worse evil stank beneath the sun
When some legitimate blockhead managed 90
so
Matters that high time was to interfere,
Though interference came from hell itself
And not the blind mad miserable mob
Happily ruled so long by pillow-luck
And divine right, — by lies in short, not
truth.
And meanwhile use the allotted minute . . ."

One, —
 Two, three, four, five — yes, five the *pendule* warns!
 Eh? Why, this wild work wanders past
 all bound
 And bearing! Exile, Leicester-square,
 the life
 I' the old gay miserable time, rehearsed,
 Tried on again like cast clothes, still to
 serve
 At a pinch, perhaps? "Who's who?"
 was aptly asked,
 Since certainly I am not I! since when?
 Where is the bud-mouthed arbitress? A
 nod
 Out-Homering Homer! Stay — there flits
 the clue
 I fain would find the end of! Yes, —
 "Meanwhile,
 Use the allotted minute!" Well, you see,
 (Veracious and imaginary Thiers,
 Who map out thus the life I might have led,
 But did not, — all the worse for earth and
 me —
 Doff spectacles, wipe pen, shut book, de-
 camp!)
 You see 'tis easy in heroics! Plain
 Pedestrian speech shall help me perorate.
 Ah, if one had no need to use the tongue!
 How obvious and how easy 'tis to talk
 Inside the soul, a ghostly dialogue —
 Instincts with guesses, — instinct, guess,
 again
 With dubious knowledge, half-experience:
 each
 And all the interlocutors alike
 Subordinating, — as decorum bids,
 Oh, never fear! but still decisively, —
 Claims from without that take too high a
 tone,
 — ("God wills this, man wants that, the
 dignity
 Prescribed a prince would wish the other
 thing") —
 Putting them back to insignificance
 Beside one intimatest fact — myself
 Am first to be considered, since I live
 Twenty years longer and then end, perhaps!
 But, where one ceases to soliloquise,
 Somehow the motives, that did well enough
 I' the darkness, when you bring them into
 light
 Are found, like those famed cave-fish, to
 lack eye
 And organ for the upper magnitudes.
 The other common creatures, of less fine
 Existence, that acknowledge earth and
 heaven,
 Have it their own way in the argument.
 Yes, forced to speak, one stoops to say —
 one's aim
 Was — what it peradventure should have
 been:

To renovate a people, mend or end
 That bane come of a blessing meant the
 world —
 Inordinate culture of the sense made quick
 By soul, — the lust o' the flesh, lust of the
 eye,
 And pride of life, — and, consequent on
 these,
 The worship of that prince o' the power
 o' the air
 Who paints the cloud and fills the emptiness 50
 And bids his votaries, famishing for truth,
 Feed on a lie.

Alack, one lies oneself
 Even in the stating that one's end was truth,
 Truth only, if one states as much in words!
 Give me the inner chamber of the soul
 For obvious easy argument! 'tis there
 One pits the silent truth against a lie —
 Truth which breaks shell a careless simple
 bird,
 Nor wants a gorget nor a beak filed fine,
 Steel spurs, and the whole armoury o' the 60
 tongue,
 To equalise the odds. But, do your best,
 Words have to come: and somehow words
 deflect
 As the best cannon ever rifled will.
 "Deflect" indeed! nor merely words from
 thoughts
 But names from facts: "Clitumnus" 1
 did I say?
 As if it had been his ox-whitening wave
 Whereby folk practised that grim cult of
 old —
 The murder of their temple's priest by who
 Would qualify for his succession. Sure —
 Nemi was the true lake's style. Dream 70
 had need
 Of the ox-whitening piece of prettiness
 And so confused names, well known once
 awake.

So, i' the Residenz yet, not Leicester-square,
 Alone, — no such congenial intercourse! —
 My reverie concludes, as dreaming should,
 With daybreak: nothing done and over
 yet,
 Except cigars! The adventure thus may be,
 Or never needs to be at all: who knows?
 My Cousin-Duke, perhaps, at whose hard
 head
 — Is it, now — is this letter to be launched, 24
 The sight of whose grey oblong, whose
 grim seal,
 Set all these fancies floating for an hour?
 Twenty years are good gain, come what
 come will!
 Double or quits! The letter goes! Or
 stays?

¹ An Italian river supposed to turn cattle white.

FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

1872.

[For an analysis of this remarkable poem, see Dr. Berdœ's "Browning Cyclopædia" (Swan Sonnenschein & Co.) and Mr. Nettleship's "Essays on Browning's Poetry."]

DONE ELVIRE.

Vous plaît-il, don Juan, nous éclaircir
ces beaux mystères?

DON JUAN.

Madame, á vous dire la vérité . . .

DONE ELVIRE.

Ah! que vous savez mal vous défendre
pour un homme de cour, et qui doit être
accoutumé à ces sortes de choses! J'ai
pitié de vous voir la confusion que vous
avez. Que ne vous armez-vous le front
d'une noble effronterie? Que ne me jurez-
vous que vous êtes toujours dans les
mêmes sentimens pour moi, que vous
m'aimez toujours avec une ardeur sans
égale, et que rien n'est capable de vous
détacher de moi que la mort? — MOLIÈRE,
Don Juan, acte i. sc. 3.

DONNA ELVIRA.

Don Juan, might you please to help one
give a guess,
Hold up a candle, clear this fine mysterious-
ness?

DON JUAN.

Madam, if needs I must declare the truth,
— in short . . .

DONNA ELVIRA.

Fie, for a man of mode, accustomed at the
court
To such a style of thing, how awkwardly
my lord
Attempts defence! You move compassion,
that's the word —
Dumb-founded and chap-fallen! Why
don't you arm your brow
With noble impudence? Why don't you
swear and vow
No sort of change is come to any sentiment
You ever had for me? Affection holds the
bent,
You love me now as erst, with passion that
makes pale

All ardour else: nor aught in nature can
avail
To separate us two, save what, in stopping
breath,
May peradventure stop devotion likewise
— death!

PROLOGUE.

AMPHIBIAN.

I.

THE fancy I had to-day,
Fancy which turned a fear!
I swam far out in the bay,
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

II.

I lay and looked at the sun,
The noon-sun looked at me:
Between us two, no one
Live creature, that I could see.

III.

Yes! There came floating by
Me, who lay floating too,
Such a strange butterfly!
Creature as dear as new:

IV.

Because the membraned wings
So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
Like soul and nought beside.

V.

A handbreadth over head!
All of the sea my own,
It owned the sky instead;
Both of us were alone.

VI.

I never shall join its flight,
For, nought buoys flesh in air.
If it touch the sea — good night!
Death sure and swift waits there.

VII.

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay?

VIII.

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell?

IX.

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

X.

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way;
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say?

XI.

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
And try a life exempt

XII.

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought, — why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

XIII.

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to oneself — "They fare
Scarce better, they need not scorn
Our sea, who live in the air!"

XIV.

Emanipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven — poetry:

XV.

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort.

XVI.

Whatever they are, we seem:
Imagine the thing they know;
All deeds they do, we dream;
Can heaven be else but so?

XVII.

And meantime, yonder streak
Meets the horizon's verge;
That is the land, to seek
If we tire or dread the surge:

XVIII.

Land the solid and safe —
To welcome again (confess!)
When, high and dry, we chafe
The body, and don the dress.

XIX.

Does she look, pity, wonder
At one who mimics flight,
Swims — heaven above, sea under,
Yet always earth in sight?

FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

I.

O TRIP and skip, Elvire! Link arm in
arm with me!
Like husband and like wife, together let us
see
The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers
on their stage,
Drawn up and under arms, and ready to
engage.

II.

Now, who supposed the night would
play us such a prank?
— That what was raw and brown, rough
pole and shaven plank?
Mere bit of hoarding, half by trestle
propped, half tuo,
Would flaunt it forth as brisk as butterfly 64
from grub?
This comes of sun and air, of Autumn
afternoon,
And Pornic and Saint Gille, whose feast
affords the boon —
This scaffold turned parterre, this flower-
bed in full blow,
Bateleurs, baladines! We shall not miss
the show!
They pace and promenade; they presently
will dance:
What good were else i' the drum and fife?
O pleasant land of France!

III.

Who saw them make their entry? At
wink of eve, be sure!
They love to steal a march, nor lightly risk
the lure.
They keep their treasure hid, nor stale
(improvident)
Before the time is ripe, each wonder of 70
their tent —

* Conjurers and dancers.

Yon six-legged sheep, to wit, and he who
 beats a gong,
 Lifts cap and waves salute, exhilarates the
 throng —
 Their ape of many years and much ad-
 venture, grim
 And grey with pitying fools who find a
 joke in him.
 Or, best, the human beauty, Mimi,
 Toinette, Fifine,
 Tricot fines down if fat, padding plumps
 up if lean,
 Ere, shedding petticoat, modesty, and such
 toys,
 They bounce forth, squalid girls trans-
 formed to gamesome boys.

IV.

No! no, thrice, Pornic, no! Perpend the
 authentic tale!
 10 'Twas not for every Gawain to gaze upon
 the Grail!
 But whoso went his rounds, when flew bat,
 flitted midge,
 Might hear across the dusk, — where
 both roads join the bridge,
 Hard by the little port, — creak a slow
 caravan,
 A chimneyed house on wheels; so shyly-
 sheathed, began
 To broaden out the bud which, bursting
 unaware,
 Now takes away our breath, queen-tulip
 of the Fair!

V.

Yet morning promised much: for,
 pitched and slung and reared
 On terrace 'neath the tower, 'twixt tree
 and tree appeared
 An airy structure; how the pennon from
 its dome,
 20 Frenetic¹ to be free, makes one red stretch
 for home!
 The home far and away, the distance where
 lives joy,
 The cure, at once and ever, of world and
 world's annoy;
 Since, what lolls full in front, a furlong
 from the booth,
 But ocean-idleness, sky-blue and millpond-
 smooth?

VI.

Frenetic to be free! And, do you know,
 there beats
 Something within my breast, as sensitive? —
 repeats
 The fever of the flag? My heart makes
 just the same
 Passionate stretch, fires up for lawlessness,
 lays claim
 To share the life they lead: losels, who
 have and use

¹ Frenzied.

The hour what way they will, — applaud 36
 them or abuse
 Society, whereof myself am at the beck,
 Whose call obey, and stoop to burden
 stiffest neck!

VII.

Why is it that whene'er a faithful few
 combine
 To cast allegiance off, play truant, nor
 repine,
 Agree to bear the worst, forego the best in
 store
 For us who, left behind, do duty as of
 yore, —
 Why is it that, disgraced, they seem to
 relish life the more?
 — Seem as they said "We know a secret
 passing praise
 Or blame of such as you! Remain! we
 go our ways
 With something you o'erlooked, forgot or 40
 chose to sweep
 Clean out of door: our pearl picked from
 your rut-ish-heap.
 You care not for your loss, we calculate
 our gain.
 All's right. Are you content? Why, so
 let things remain!
 To the wood then, to the wild: free life,
 full liberty!"
 And when they rendezvous beneath the
 inclement sky,
 House by the hedge, reduced to brute-
 companionship,
 — Misguided ones who gave society the
 slip,
 And find too late how boon a parent they
 despised,
 What ministration spurned, how sweet
 and civilised —
 Then, left alone at last with self-sought 50
 wretchedness,
 No interloper else! — why is it, can we
 guess? —
 At somebody's expense, goes up so frank
 a laugh?
 As though they held the corn, and left us
 only chaff
 From garners crammed and closed. And
 we indeed are clever
 If we get grain as good, by thrashing
 straw for ever!

VIII.

Still, truants as they are and purpose yet
 to be,
 That nowise needs forbid they venture —
 as you see —
 To cross confine, approach the once
 familiar roof
 O' the kindly race their flight estranged:
 stand half aloof,

Sidle half up, press near, and proffer wares
for sale

— In their phrase — make, in ours, white
levy of black mail.

They, of the wild, require some touch of
us the tame,

Since clothing, meat and drink, mean
money all the same.

IX.

If hunger, proverbs say, allures the
wolf from wood,

Much more the bird must dare a dash at
something good:

Must snatch up, bear away in beak, the
trifle-treasure

To wood and wild, and then — O how
enjoy at leisure!

Was never tree-built nest, you climbed
and took, of bird

10 (Rare city-visitant, talked of, scarce seen
or heard),

But, when you would dissect the structure,
piece by piece,

You found, enwreathed amid the country-
product — fleece

And feather, thistle-fluffs and bearded
windle-straws¹ —

Some shred of foreign silk, unravelling of
gauze,

Bit, may be, of brocade, mid fur and blow-
bell-down:

Filched plainly from mankind, dear trib-
ute paid by town,

Which proved how oft the bird had plucked
up heart of grace,

Swooped down at waif and stray, made
furtively our place

Pay tax and toll, then borne the booty to
enrich

20 Her paradise i' the waste; the how and
why of which,

That is the secret, there the mystery that
stings!

X.

For, what they traffic in, consists of just
the things

We, — proud ones who so scorn dwellers
without the pale,

Bateleurs, baladines, white leviers of
black mail, —

I say, they sell what we most pique us that
we keep!

How comes it, all we hold so dear they
count so cheap?

XI.

What price should you impose, for in-
stance, on repute,

Good fame, your own good fame and
family's to boot?

¹ The tufted hair-grass.

Stay start of quick moustache, arrest the
angry rise

Of eyebrow! All I asked is answered by 30
surprise.

Now tell me: are you worth the cost of a
cigar?

Go boldly, enter booth, disburse the coin
at bar

Of doorway where presides the master of
the troop,

And forthwith you survey his Graces in
a group,

Live Picture, picturesque no doubt and
close to life:

His sisters, right and left; the Grace in
front, his wife.

Next, who is this performs the feat of the
Trapeze?

Lo, she is launched, look — fie, the fairy!
— how she flees

O'er all those heads thrust back, —
mouths, eyes, one gape and stare, —

No scrap of skirt impedes free passage 40
through the air,

Till, plumb on the other side, she lights and
laughs again,

That fairy-form, whereof each muscle, nay,
each vein

The curious may inspect, — his daughter
that he sells

Each rustic for five sous. Desiderate
ought else

O' the vendor? As you leave his show,
why, joke the man!

"You cheat: your six-legged sheep, I re-
collect, began

Both life and trade, last year, trimmed
properly and clipt,

As the Twin-headed Babe, and Human
Nondescript!"

What does he care? You paid his price,
may pass your jest.

So values he repute, good fame, and all the 50
rest!

XII.

But try another tack; say: "I indulge
caprice,

Who am Don and Duke, and Knight, be-
side, o' the Golden Fleece,

And, never mind how rich. Abandon this
career!

Have hearth and home, nor let your
womankind appear

Without as multiplied a coating as pro-
tects

An onion from the eye! Become, in all
respects,

God-fearing householder, subsistent by
brain-skill,

Hand-labour; win your bread whatever
way you will,

So it be honestly, — and, while I have a
purse.

Means shall not lack !” — His thanks will
be the roundest curse
That ever rolled from lip.

XIII.

Now, what is it? — returns
The question — heartens so this losel that
he spurious
All we so prize? I want, put down in
black and white,
What compensating joy, unknown and
infinite,
Turns lawlessness to law, makes destitu-
tion — wealth,
Vice — virtue, and disease of soul and
body — health?

XIV.

Ah, the slow shake of head, the melan-
choly smile,
The sigh almost a sob! What’s wrong,
was right erewhile?
10 Why are we two at once such ocean-width
apart?
Pale fingers press my arm, and sad eyes
probe my heart.
Why is the wife in trouble?

XV.

This way, this way, Fifine!
Here’s she, shall make my thoughts be
surer what they mean!
First let me read the signs, pourtray you
past mistake
The gipsy’s foreign self, no swarth our sun
could bake.
Yet where’s a woolly trace degrades the
wiry hair?
And note the Greek-nymph nose, and —
oh, my Hebrew pair
Of eye and eye — o’erarched by velvet of
the mole —
That swim as in a sea, that dip and rise and
roll,
20 Spilling the light around! While either
ear is cut
Thin as a dusk-leaved rose carved from a
cocoa-nut.
And then, her neck! now, grant you had
the power to deck,
Just as your fancy pleased, the bistre-
length of neck,
Could lay, to shine against its shade, a
moonlike row
Of pearls, each round and white as bubble
Cupids blow
Big out of mother’s milk, — what pearl-
moon would surpass
That string of mock-turquoise, those al-
mandines¹ of glass,
Where girlhood terminates? for with
breasts’-birth commence

¹ Garnets.

The boy, and page-costume, till pink and
impudence
End admirably all: complete the creature 3
trips
Our way now, brings sunshine upon her
spangled hips,
As here she fronts us full, with pose half-
frank, half-fierce!

XVI.

Words urged in vain, Elvire! You
waste your quarte and tierce,
Lunge at a phantom here, try fence in
fairylane.
For me, I own defeat, ask but to under-
stand
The acknowledged victory of whom I call
my queen,
Sexless and bloodless sprite: though mis-
chievous and mean,
Yet free and flower-like too, with loveli-
ness for law,
And self-sustainment made morality.

XVII.

A flaw
Do you account i’ the lily, of lands which 40
travellers know,
That, just as golden gloom supersedes
Northern snow
I’ the chalice, so, about each pistil, spice
is packed, —
Deliriously-drugged scent, in lieu of odour
lacked,
With us, by bee and moth, their banquet
to enhance
At morn and eve, when dew, the chilly
sustenance,
Needs mixture of some chaste and tem-
perate perfume?
I ask, is she in fault who guards such
golden gloom,
Such dear and damning scent, by who
cares what devices,
And takes the idle life of insects she en-
tices
When, drowned to heart’s desire, they 50
sate the inside
O’ the lily, mark her wealth and manifest
her pride?

XVIII.

But, wiser, we keep off, nor tempt the
acid juice;
Discreet we peer and praise, put rich things
to right use.
No flavoured venom’d bell, — the rose
it is, I wot,
Only the rose, we pluck and place, un-
wronged a jot,
No worse for homage done by every
devotee,
I’ the proper loyal throne, on breast where
rose should be.

Or if the simpler sweets we have to choose
among,
Would taste between our teeth, and give
its toy the tongue, —
O gorgeous poison-plague, on thee no
hearts are set!
We gather daisy meek, or maiden
violet:
I think it is Elvire we love, and not
Fifine.

XIX.

“How does she make my thoughts be
sure of what they mean?”
Judge and be just! Suppose, an age and
time long past
Renew for our behoof one pageant more,
the last
O’ the kind, sick Louis liked to see defile
between
Him and the yawning grave, its passage
served to screen.
With eye as grey as lead, with cheek as
brown as bronze,
Here where we stand, shall sit and suffer
Louis Onze:
The while from yonder tent parade forth,
not — oh, no —
Bateleurs, baladines! but range them-
selves a-row
Those well-sung women-worthies’ whereof
loud fame still finds
Some echo linger faint, less in our hearts
than minds.

XX.

See, Helen! pushed in front o’ the
world’s worst night and storm,
By Lady Venus’ hand on shoulder: the
sweet form
Shrinkingly prominent, though mighty,
like a moon
Outbreaking from a cloud, to put harsh
things in tune,
And magically bring mankind to ac-
quiesce
In its own ravage, — call no curse upon,
but bless
(Beldame, a moment since) the outbreak-
ing beauty, now,
That casts o’er all the blood a candour
from her brow.
See, Cleopatra! bared, the entire and sinu-
ous wealth
O’ the shining shape; each orb of indolent
ripe health,
Captured, just where it finds a fellow-orb
as fine
If the body: traced about by jewels which
outline,
Fire-frame, and keep distinct, perfections
— lest they melt

To soft smooth unity ere half their held be
felt:

Yet, o’er that white and wonder, a soul’s
predominance
I’ the head so high and haught — except
one thievish glance,
From back of oblong eye, intent to count
the slain.

Hush, — O I know, Elvire! Be patient,
more remain!

What say you to Saint . . . Pish! What-
ever Saint you please,

Cold-pinnaced aloft o’ the spire, prays
calm the seas

From Pornic Church, and oft at midnight
(peasants say)

Goes walking out to save from shipwreck:
well she may!

For think how many a year has she been
conversant

With nought but winds and rains, sharp 40
courtesy and scant

O’ the wintry snow that coats the pent-
house of her shrine,

Covers each knee, climbs near, but spares
the smile benign

Which seems to say “I looked for scarce
so much from earth!”

She follows, one long thin pure finger in the
girth

O’ the girdle — whence the folds of gar-
ment, eye and eye,

Besprent with fleurs-de-lys, flow down
and multiply

Around her feet, — and one, pressed
hushingly to lip:

As if, while thus we made her march, some
foundering ship

Might miss her from her post, nearer to
God half-way

In heaven, and she inquired “Who that 50
treads earth can pray?

I doubt if even she, the unashamed!
though, sure,

She must have stripped herself only to
clothe the poor.”

XXI.

This time, enough’s a feast, not one
more form, Elvire!

Provided you allow that, bringing up the
rear

O’ the bevy I am loth to — by one bird —
curtail,

First note may lead to last, an octave
crown the scale,

And this femininity be followed — do not
flout! —

By — who concludes the masque with
curtsey, smile and pout,

Submissive-mutinous? No other than
Fifine

Points toe, imposes haunch. and pleads 60
with tambourine!

XXII.

"Well, what's the meaning here, what
does the masque intend,
Which, unabridged, we saw file past us,
with no end
Of fair ones, till Fifine came, closed the
catalogue?"

XXIII.

"Task fancy yet again! Suppose you
cast this clog
Of flesh away (that weeps, upbraids, with-
stands my arm)
And pass to join your peers, paragon
charm with charm,
As I shall show you may, — prove best of
beauty there!
Yourself confront yourself! This, help
me to declare
That yonder-you, who stand beside these,
braving each
And blinking none, beat her who lured to
Troy-town beach
The purple prows of Greece, — nay, beat
Fifine; whose face,
Mark how I will inflame, when seigneur-
like I place
I' the tambourine, to spot the strained and
piteous blank
Of pleading parchment, see, no less than a
whole franc!

XXIV.

Ah, do you mark the brown o' the cloud,
made bright with fire
Through and through? as, old wiles suc-
ceeding to desire,
Quality (you and I) once more compas-
sionate
A hapless infant, doomed (fie on such
partial fate!)
To sink the inborn shame, waive privilege
of sex,
And posture as you see, support the nods
and becks
Of clowns that have their stare, nor
always pay its price;
An infant born perchance as sensitive and
nice
As any soul of you, proud dames, whom
destiny
Keeps uncontaminate from stigma of the
stye
She wallows in! You draw back skirts
from filth like her
Who, possibly, braves scorn, if, scorned,
she minister
To age, want, and disease of parents one or
both;
Nay, peradventure, stoops to degradation,
loth

That some just-budding sister, the dew yet
on the rose,
Should have to share in turn the ignoble
trade, — who knows?

XXV.

Ay, who indeed! Myself know noth-
ing, but dare guess
That off she trips in haste to hand the
booty . . . yes,
'Twixt fold and fold of tent, there looms
he, dim-discerned,
The ogre, lord of all those lavish limbs
have earned!
— Brute-beast-face, — ravage, scar, scowl
and malignancy, —
O' the Strong Man, whom (no doubt, her
husband) by-and-by
You shall behold do feats: lift up nor
quail beneath
A quintal¹ in each hand, a cart-wheel
'twixt his teeth.
Oh she prefers sheer strength to ineffective
grace,
Breeding and culture! seeks the essential
in the case!
To him has flown my franc; and welcome,
if that squint
O' the diabolic eye so soften through ab-
sinthe,
That, for once tambourine, tunic and
tricot² 'scape
Their customary curse "Not half the gain
o' the ape!"
Ay, they go in together!

XXVI.

Yet still her phantom stays
Opposite, where you stand: as steady
'neath our gaze —
The live Elvire's and mine — though
fancy-stuff and mere
Illusion; to be judged, — dream-figures, —
without fear
Or favour, those the false, by you and me
the true.

XXVII.

"What puts it in my head to make your-
self judge you?"
Well, it may be, the name of Helen brought
to mind
A certain myth I mused in years long left
behind:
How she that fled from Greece with Paris
whom she loved,
And came to Troy, and there found shelter
and so proved
Such cause of the world's woe, — how she,
old stories call
This creature, Helen's self, never saw
Troy at all.

¹ A weight of 100 lbs.² A jersey.

Jove had his fancy-fit, must needs take
empty air,
Fashion her likeness forth, and set the
phantom there
I' the midst for sport, to try conclusions
with the blind
And blundering race, the game create for
Gods, mankind:
Experiment on these, — establish who
would yearn
To give up life for her, who, other-minded,
spurn
The best her eyes could smile, — make
half the world sublime,
And half absurd, for just a phantom all the
time!
Meanwhile true Helen's self sat, safe and
far away,
By a great river-side, beneath a purer day,
With solitude around, tranquillity within;
Was able to lean forth, look, listen, through
the din
And stir; could estimate the worthlessness
or worth
Of Helen who inspired such passion to
the earth,
A phantom all the time! That put it in
my head,
To make yourself judge you — the phan-
tom-wife instead
O' the tearful true Elvire!

XXVIII.

I thank the smile at last

Which thins away the tear! Our sky
was overcast,
And something fell; but day clears up: if
there chanced rain,
The landscape glistens more. I have not
vexed in vain
Elvire: because she knows, now she has
stood the test,
How, this and this being good, herself may
still be best
O' the beauty in review; because the
flesh that claimed
Unduly my regard, she thought, the
taste, she blamed
In me, for things extern, was all mistake,
she finds, —
Or will find, when I prove that bodies show
me minds,
That, through the outward sign, the in-
ward grace allures,
And sparks from heaven transpierce
earth's coarsest covertures, —
All by demonstrating the value of Fifine!

XXIX.

Partake my confidence! No creature's
made so mean
But that, some way, it boasts, could we
investigate,

Its supreme worth: fulfils, by ordinance
of fate,
Its momentary task, gets glory all its
own,
Tastes triumph in the world, pre-eminent,
alone.
Where is the single grain of sand, mid
millions heaped
Confusedly on the beach, but, did we
know, has leaped
Or will leap, would we wait, i' the century,
some once,
To the very throne of things? — earth's
brightest for the nonce,
When sunshine shall impinge on just that
grain's facette
Which fronts him fullest, first, returns 40
his ray with jet
Of promptest praise, thanks God best in
creation's name!
As firm is my belief, quick sense perceives
the same
Self-vindicating flash illustrate every man
And woman of our mass, and prove,
throughout the plan,
No detail but, in place allotted it, was prime
And perfect.

xxx.

Witness her, kept waiting all this time!
What happy angle makes Fifine reverbe-
rate
Sunshine, least sand-grain, she, of shadiest
social state?
No adamantine shield, polished like Helen
there,
Fit to absorb the sun, regorge him till the 50
glare,
Dazing the universe, draw Troy-ward
those blind beaks
Of equal-sided ships rowed by the well-
greaved Greeks!
No Asian mirror, like yon Ptolemaic witch
Able to fix sun fast and tame sun down,
enrich,
Not burn the world with beams thus flatter-
ingly rolled
About her, head to foot, turned slavish
snakes of gold!
And oh, no tinted pane of oriel sanctity,
Does our Fifine afford, such as permits
supply
Of lustrous heaven, revealed, far more
than mundane sight
Could master, to thy cell, pure Saint! 60
where, else too bright,
So suits thy sense the orb, that, what out-
side was noon,
Pales, through thy lozenged blue, to meek
benefic moon!
What then? does that prevent each dung-
hill, we may pass
Daily, from boasting too its bit of looking-
glass,

Its sherd which, sun-smit, shines, shoots
 arrowy fire beyond
 That satin-muffled mope, your sulky dia-
 mond?

XXXI.

And now, the mingled ray she shoots, I
 decompose.
 Her antecedents, take for execrable!
 Gloze
 No whit on your premiss: let be, there was
 no worst
 Of degradation spared Fifine: ordained
 from first
 To last, in body and soul, for one life-long
 debauch,
 The Pariah of the North, the European
 Nautch!
 This, far from seek to hide, she puts in
 evidence
 10 Calmly, displays the brand, bids pry
 without offence
 Your finger on the place. You comment
 "Fancy us
 So operated on, maltreated, mangled thus!
 Such torture in our case, had we sur-
 vived an hour?
 Some other sort of flesh and blood must
 be, with power
 Appropriate to the vile, unsensitive, tough-
 thonged,
 In lieu of our fine nerve! Be sure, she
 was not wronged
 Too much: you must not think she
 winced at prick as we!"
 Come, come, that's what you say, or would,
 were thoughts but free.

XXXII.

Well then, thus much confessed, what
 wonder if there steal
 20 Unchallenged to my heart the force of one
 appeal
 She makes, and justice stamp the sole
 claim she asserts?
 So absolutely good is truth, truth never
 hurts
 The teller, whose worst crime gets some-
 how grace, avowed.
 To me, that silent pose and prayer pro-
 claimed aloud
 "Know all of me outside, the rest be
 emptiness
 For such as you! I call attention to my
 dress,
 Coiffure, outlandish features, lithe memor-
 able limbs,
 Piquant entreaty, all that eye-glance over-
 skims.
 Does this give pleasure? Then, repay
 the pleasure, put
 30 Its price i' the tambourine! Do you seek
 further? Tut!

I'm just my instrument, — sound hollow:
 mere smooth skin
 Stretched o'er gilt framework, I: rub-dub,
 nought else within —
 Always, for such as you! — if I have use
 elsewhere, —
 If certain bells, now mute, can jingle,
 need you care?
 Be it enough, there's truth i' the pleading,
 which comports
 With no word spoken out in cottages or
 courts,
 Since all I plead is 'Pay for just the sight
 you see,
 'And give no credit to another charm in
 me!'
 Do I say, like your Love? 'To praise my
 face is well,
 'But, who would know my worth, must
 search my heart to tell!'
 Do I say, like your Wife? 'Had I passed
 in review
 'The produce of the globe, my man of men
 were — you!'
 Do I say, like your Helen? 'Yield your-
 self up, obey
 'Implicitly, nor pause to question, to sur-
 vey
 'Even the worshipful! prostrate you at my
 shrine!
 'Shall you dare controvert what the world
 counts divine?
 'Array your private taste, own liking of the
 sense,
 'Own longing of the soul, against the
 impudence
 'Of history, the blare and bullying of
 verse?
 'As if man ever yet saw reason to disburse
 50 'The amount of what sense liked, soul
 longed for, — given, devised
 'As love, forsooth, — until the price was
 recognised
 'As moderate enough by divers fellow-men!
 'Then, with his warrant safe that these
 would love too, then,
 'Sure that particular gain implies a public
 loss,
 'And that no smile he buys but proves a
 slash across
 'The face, a stab into the side of some-
 body —
 'Sure that, along with love's main pur-
 chase, he will buy
 'Up the whole stock of earth's uncharit-
 ableness,
 'Envy and hatred, — then, decides he to
 profess
 'His estimate of one, by love discerned,
 though dim
 'To all the world beside: since what's the
 world to him?'
 Do I say, like your Queen of Egypt?
 'Who foregoes

'My cup of witchcraft — fault be on the fool! He knows
 'Nothing of how I pack my wine-press, turn its winch
 'Three-times-three, all the time to song and dance, nor flinch
 'From charming on and on, till at the last I squeeze
 'Out the exhaustive drop that leaves behind mere lees
 'And dregs, vapidity, thought essence heretofore!
 'Sup of my sorcery, old pleasures please no more!
 'Be great, be good, love, learn, have potency of hand
 'Or heart or head, — what boots? You die, nor understand
 'What bliss might be in life: you ate the grapes, but knew
 'Never the taste of wine, such vintage as I brew!
 Do I say, like your Saint? 'An exquisitest touch
 'Bides in the birth of things: no after-time can much
 'Enhance that fine, that faint, fugitive first of all!
 'What colour paints the cup o' the May-rose, like the small
 'Suspicion of a blush which doubtfully begins?
 'What sound outwarbles brook, while, at the source, it wins
 'That moss and stone dispart, allow its bubblings breathe?
 'What taste excels the fruit, just where sharp flavours sheathe
 'Their sting, and let encroach the honey that allays?
 'And so with soul and sense; when sanctity betrays
 'First fear lest earth below seem real as heaven above,
 'And holy worship, late, change soon to sinful love —
 'Where is the plenitude of passion which endures
 'Comparison with that, I ask of amateurs?'
 Do I say, like Elvire" . . .

XXXIII.

(Your husband holds you fast,
 Will have you listen, learn your character at last!)
 "Do I say? — like her mixed unrest and discontent,
 Reproachfulness and scorn, with that submission blent
 So strangely, in the face, by sad smiles and gay tears, —

Quiescence which attacks, rebellion which endears, —
 Say? 'As you loved me once, could you but love me now!
 'Years probably have graved their passage on my brow,
 'Lips turn more rarely red, eyes sparkle less than erst;
 'Such tribute body pays to time; but, un-amerced,
 'The soul retains, nay, boasts old treasure multiplied.
 'Though — dew-prime flee, — mature at noonday, love defied
 'Chance, the wind, change, the rain: love, strenuous all the more
 'For storm, struck deeper root and choicer fruitage bore,
 'Despite the rocking world; yet truth struck root in vain:
 'While tenderness bears fruit, you praise, not taste again.
 'Why? They are yours, which once were hardly yours, might go
 'To grace another's ground: and then — the hopes we know,
 'The fears we keep in mind! — when, ours to arbitrate,
 'Your part was to bow neck, bid fall decree of fate.
 'Then, O the knotty point — white-night's work to revolve —
 'What meant that smile, that sigh? Not Solon's self could solve!
 'Then, O the deep surmise what one word might express,
 'And if what seemed her "No" may not have meant her "Yes!"
 'Then, such annoy, for cause calm welcome, such acquit
 'Of rapture if, refused her arm, hand touched her wrist!
 'Now, what's a smile to you? Poor candle that lights up
 'The decent household gloom which sends you out to sup.
 'A tear? worse! warns that health requires you keep aloof
 'From nuptial chamber, since rain penetrates the roof!
 'Soul, body got and gained, inalienably safe
 'Your own, become despised; more worth has any waif
 'Or stray from neighbour's pale: pouch that, — 'tis pleasure, pride,
 'Novelty, property, and larceny beside!
 'Preposterous thought! to find no value fixed in things,
 'To covet all you see, hear, dream of, till fate brings
 'About that, what you want, you gain; then follows change.

'Give you the sun to keep, forthwith must
fancy range:
'A goodly lamp, no doubt, — yet might
you catch her hair
'And capture, as she frisks, the fen-fire
dancing there!
'What do I say? at least a meteor's half in
heaven;
'Provided filth but shine, my husband
hankers even
'After putridity that's phosphorescent,
cribs
'The rustic's tallow-rush, makes 'spoil of
urchins' squibs,
'In short prefers to me — chaste, temper-
ate, serene —
'What sputters green and blue, this fizgig
(called Fifine!)''

XXXIV.

10 So all your sex mistake! Strange that
so plain a fact
Should raise such dire debate! Few
families were racked
By torture self-supplied, did Nature grant
but this —
That women comprehend mental analysis!

XXXV.

Elvire, do you recall when, years ago,
our home
The intimation reached, a certain pride of
Rome,
Authenticated piece, in the third, last and
best
Manner, — whatever fools and connois-
seurs contest, —
No particle disturbed by rude restorer's
touch,
The palaced picture-pearl, so long eluding
clutch
20 Of creditor, at last, the Rafael might —
could we
But come to terms — change lord, pass
from the Prince to me?
I think you recollect my fever of a year:
How the Prince would, and how he would
not; now, — too dear
That promise was, he made his grandsire
so long since,
Rather to boast "I own a Rafael" than
"am Prince!"
And now, the fancy soothed — if really
sell he must
His birthright for a mess of pottage —
such a thrust
I' the vitals of the Prince were mollified
by balm,
Could he prevail upon his stomach to bear
quail,
30 And bequeath Liberty (because a pur-
chaser

Was ready with the sum — a trifle!) yes,
transfer
His heart at all events to that land where,
at least,
Free institutions reign! And so, its
price increased
Five-fold (Americans are such impor-
tunates!),
Soon must his Rafael start for the United
States.
O alternating bursts of hope now, then
despair!
At last, the bargain's struck, I'm all but
beggared, there
The Rafael faces me, in fine, no dream at
all,
My housemate, evermore to glorify my
wall.
A week must pass, before heart-palpita-
tions sink,
In gloating o'er my gain, so late I edged
the brink
Of doom; a fortnight more, I spent in
Paradise:
"Was outline e'er so true, could colour-
ing entice
So calm, did harmony and quiet so
avail?
How right, how resolute, the action tells
the tale!"
A month, I bid my friends congratulate
their best:
"You happy Don!" (to me): "The block-
head!" (to the rest):
"No doubt he thinks his daub original,
poor dupe!"
Then I resume my life: one chamber must
not coop
Man's life in, though it boast a marvel
like my prize.
Next year, I saunter past with unaverted
eyes,
Nay, loll and turn my back: perchance to
overlook
With relish, leaf by leaf, Doré's last pic-
ture-book.

XXXVI.

Imagine that a voice reproached me
from its frame:
"Here do I hang, and may! Your Rafael,
just the same,
'Tis only you that change: no ecstasies of
yore!
No purposed suicide distracts you any
more!"
Prompt would my answer meet such frivo-
lous attack:
"You misappropriate sensations. What
men lack,
And labour to obtain, is hoped and feared 6
about
After a fashion; what they once obtain,
makes doubt,

Expectancy's old fret and fume, hence-
forward void.
But do they think to hold such havings un-
alloyed
By novel hopes and fears, of fashion just
as new,
To correspond i' the scale? Nowise, I
promise you!
Mine you are, therefore mine will be, as fit
to cheer
My soul and glad my sense to-day as this-
day-year.
So, any sketch or scrap, pochade,¹ carica-
ture,
Made in a moment, meant a moment to
endure,
I snap at, seize, enjoy, then tire of, throw
aside,
to Find you in your old place. But if a ser-
vant cried
'Fire in the gallery!' — methinks, were I
engaged
In Doré, elbow-deep, picture-books mil-
lion-paged
To the four winds would pack, sped by the
heartiest curse
Was ever launched from lip, to strew the
universe.
Would not I brave the best o' the burning,
bear away
Either my perfect piece in safety, or else
stay
And share its fate, be made its martyr nor
repine?
Inextricably wed, such ashes mixed with
mine!"

XXXVII

For which I get the eye, the hand, the
heart, the whole
so O' the wondrous wife again!

XXXVIII.

But no, play out your *rôle*
I' the pageant! 'Tis not fit your phan-
tom leave the stage:
I want you, there, to make you, here,
confess you wage
Successful warfare, pique those proud
ones, and advance
Claim to . . . equality? nay, but pre-
dominance.
In *physique*, o'er them all, where Helen
heads the scene
Closed by its tiniest of tail-tips, pert Fifine.
How ravishingly pure you stand in pale
constraint!
My new-created shape, without or touch or
taint,
Inviolate of life and worldliness and sin —
so Vettered, I hold my flower, her own cup's
weight would win

¹ A sketch.

From off the tall slight stalk atop of
which she turns
And trembles, makes appeal to one who
roughly earns
Her thanks instead of blame, (did lily only
know,)
By thus constraining length of lily, letting
snow
Of cup-crown, that's her face, look from
its guardian stake,
Superb on all that crawls beneath, and
mutely make
Defiance, with the mouth's white move-
ment of disdain,
To all that stoops, retires and hovers round
again!
How windingly the limbs delay to lead up,
reach
Where, crowned, the head waits calm: as 49
if reluctant, each,
That eye should traverse quick such
lengths of loveliness,
From feet, which just are found embedded
in the dress
Deep swathed about with folds and flow-
ings virginal,
Up to the pleated breasts, rebellious 'neath
their pall,
As if the vesture's snow were moulding
sleep not death,
Must melt and so release; whereat, from
the fine sheath,
The flower-cup-crown starts free, the face
is unconcealed,
And what shall now divert me, once the
sweet face revealed,
From all I loved so long, so lingeringly
left?

XXXIX.

Because indeed your face fits into just 50
the left
O' the heart of me, Elvire, makes right
and whole once more
All that was half itself without you! As
before,
My truant finds its place! Doubtlessly
sea-shells yearn,
If plundered by sad chance: would pray
their pearls return,
Let negligently slip away into the
wave!
Never may eyes desist, those eyes so grey
and grave,
From their slow sure supply of the effluent
soul within!
And, would you humour me? I dare to
ask, unpin
The web of that brown hair! O'erwash o'
the sudden, but
As promptly, too, disclose, on either side. 51
the jut
Of alabaster brow! So part rich rillet
dyed

Deep by the woodland leaf, when down
they pour, each side
O' the rock-top, pushed by Spring!

XI.

"And where i' the world is all
This wonder, you detail so trippingly,
espied?
My mirror would reflect a tall, thin, pale,
deep-eyed
Personage, pretty once, it may be, doubt-
less still
Löving, — a certain grace yet lingers, if
you will, —
But all this wonder, where?"

XII.

Why, where but in the sense
And soul of me, Art's judge? Art is my
evidence
That something was, is, might be; but no
more thing itself,
10 Than flame is fuel. Once the verse-book
laid on shelf,
The picture turned to wall, the music fled
from ear, —
Each beauty, born of each, grows clearer
and more clear,
Mine henceforth, ever mine!

XIII.

But if I would retrace
Effect, in Art, to cause, — corroborate,
erase
What's right or wrong i' the lines, test
fancy in my brain
By fact which gave it birth? I re-pruse
in vain
The verse, I fail to find that vision of de-
light
I' the Bazzi's¹ lost-profile, eye-edge so
exquisite.
And, music: what? that burst of pillared
cloud by day
20 And pillared fire by night, was product,
must we say,
Of modulating just, by enharmonic
change, —
The augmented sixth resolved, — from out
the straighter range
Of D sharp minor, — leap of disimprisoned
thrall, —
Into thy light and life, D major natural?

XIII.

Elvire, will you partake in what I shall
impart?
I seem to understand the way heart chooses
heart
By help of the outside form, — a reason for
our wild

¹ An Italian painter.

Diversity in choice, — why each grows
reconciled
To what is absent, what superfluous in the
mask
Of flesh that's meant to yield, — did na- 34
ture ply her task
As artist should, — precise the features of
the soul,
Which, if in any case they found expres-
sion, whole
I' the traits, would give a type, un-
doubtedly display
A novel, true, distinct perfection in its way.
Never shall I believe any two souls were
made
Similar; granting, then, each soul of
every grade
Was meant to be itself, prove in itself com-
plete
And, in completion, good, — nay, best o'
the kind, — as meet
Needs must it be that show on the outside
correspond
With inward substance, — flesh, the dress 40
which soul has donned,
Exactly reproduce, — were only justice
done
Inside and outside too, — types perfect
every one.
How happens it that here we meet a
mystery
Insoluble to man, a plaguy puzzle? Why
Each soul is either made imperfect, and
deserves
As rude a face to match; or else a bungler
swerves,
And nature, on a soul worth rendering
aright,
Works ill, or proves perverse, or, in her
own despite,
— Here too much, there too little, — bids
each face, more or less,
Retire from beauty, make approach to 50
ugliness?
And yet succeeds the same: since, what is
wanting to success,
If somehow every face, no matter how
deform,
Evidence, to some one of hearts on earth,
that, warm
Beneath the veriest ash, there hides a
spark of soul
Which, quickened by love's breath, may
yet pervade the whole
O' the grey, and, free again, be fire? —
of worth the same,
How'er produced, for, great or little,
flame is flame.
A mystery, whereof solution is to seek.

XIV.

I find it in the fact that each soul, just
as weak

Its own way as its fellow, — departure
from design
As flagrant in the flesh, — goes striving to
combine
With what shall right the wrong, the under
or above
The standard: supplement unloveliness by
love.
— Ask Plato else! And this corroborates
the sage,
That Art, — which I may style the love of
loving, rage
Of knowing, seeing, feeling the absolute
truth of things
For truth's sake, whole and sole, not any
good, truth brings
The knower, seer, feeler, beside, — in-
stinctive Art
Must fumble for the whole, once fixing on
a part
However poor, surpass the fragment, and
aspire
To reconstruct thereby the ultimate entire.
Art, working with a will, discards the
superflux,
Contributes to defect, toils on till, — *fiat*
lux, —
There's the restored, the prime, the indi-
vidual type!

XLV.

Look, for example now! This piece of
broken pipe
(Some shipman's solace erst) shall act as
crayon; and
What tablet better serves my purpose than
the sand?
— Smooth slab whereon I draw, no matter
with what skill,
A face, and yet another, and yet another
still.
There lie my three prime types of beauty!

XLVI.

Laugh your best!
"Exaggeration and absurdity?" Con-
fessed!
Yet, what may that face mean, no matter
for its nose,
A yard long, or its chin, a foot short?

XLVII.

"You suppose,
Horror?" Exactly! What's the odds if,
more or less
By yard or foot, the features do manage to
express
Such meaning in the main? Were I of
Gérôme's force,
Nor feeble as you see, quick should my
crayon course
O'er outline, curb, excite, till, — so com-
pletion speeds

With Gérôme¹ well at work, — observe 30
how brow recedes,
Head shudders back on spine, as if one
hailed the hair,
Would have the full-face front what pin-
point eye's sharp stare
Announces; mouth agape to drink the
flowing fate,
While chin protrudes to meet the burst o'
the wave: elate
Almost, spurred on to brave necessity,
expend
All life left, in one flash, as fire does at its
end.
Retrenchment and addition effect a master-
piece,
Not change i' the motive: here diminish,
there increase —
And who wants Horror, has it.

XLVIII.

Who wants some other show
Of soul, may seek elsewhere — this second 40
of the row?
What does it give for germ, monadic mere
intent
Of mind in face, faint first of meanings
ever meant?
Why, possibly, a grin, that, strengthened,
grows a laugh;
That, softened, leaves a smile; that,
tempered, bids you quaff
At such a magic cup as English Reynolds
once
Compounded: for the witch pulls out of
you response
Like Garrick's to Thalia, however due
may be
Your homage claimed by that stiff-stoled
Melpomene!

XLIX.

And just this one face more! Pardon
the bold pretence!
May there not lurk some hint, struggle 50
toward evidence
In that compressed mouth, those strained
nostrils, steadfast eyes
Of utter passion, absolute self-sacrifice,
Which, — could I but subdue the wild
grotesque, refine
That bulge of brow, make blunt that
nose's aquiline,
And let, although compressed, a point of
pulp appear
I' the mouth, — would give at last the
portrait of Elvire?

L.

Well, and if so succeed hand-practice
on awry
Preposterous art-mistake, shall soul-profi-
ciency

* Modern French painter.

Despair, — when exercised on nature,
 which at worst
 Always implies success, however crossed
 and curst
 By failure, — such as art would emulate
 in vain?
 Shall any soul despair of setting free
 again
 Trait after trait, until the type as wholly
 start
 Forth, visible to sense, as that minutest
 part,
 (Whatever the chance) which first arrest-
 ing eye, warned soul
 That, under wrong enough and ravage, lay
 the whole
 O' the loveliness it "loved" — I take the
 accepted phrase?

LI.

So I account for tastes: each chooses,
 none gainsays
 The fancy of his fellow, a paradise for
 him,
 A hell for all beside. You can but crown
 the brim
 O' the cup; if it be full, what matters less
 or more?
 Let each, i' the world, amend his love, as
 I, o' the shore
 My sketch, and the result as undisputed
 be!
 Their handiwork to them, and my Elvire
 to me:
 — Result more beautiful than beauty's
 self, when lo,
 What was my Rafael turns my Michel-
 agnolo!

LII.

For, we two boast, beside our pearl, a
 diamond.
 I' the palace-gallery, the corridor beyond,
 Upheaves itself a marble, a magnitude
 man-shaped
 As snow might be. One hand, — the
 Master's, — smoothed and scraped
 That mass, he hammered on and hewed
 at, till he hurled
 Life out of death, and left a challenge: for
 the world,
 Death still, — since who shall dare, close
 to the image, say
 If this be purposed Art, or mere mimetic
 play
 Of Nature? — wont to deal with crag or
 cloud, as stuff
 To fashion novel forms, like forms we
 know, enough
 For recognition, but enough unlike the
 same,
 To leave no hope ourselves may profit by
 her game;

Death therefore to the world. Step back
 a pace or two!
 And then, who dares dispute the gradual
 birth its due
 Of breathing life, or breathless immor-
 tality,
 Where out she stands, and yet stops short,
 half bold, half shy,
 Hesitates on the threshold of things, since
 partly blent
 With stuff she needs must quit, her native
 element
 I' the mind o' the Master, — what's the
 creature, dear-divine
 Yet earthly-awful too, so manly-femi-
 nine,
 Pretends this white advance? What
 startling brain-escape
 Of Michelagnolo takes elemental shape?
 I think he meant the daughter of the old
 man o' the sea,
 Emerging from her wave, goddess
 Eidotheé —
 She who, in elvish sport, spite with benevo-
 lence
 Mixed Mab-wise up, must needs instruct
 the Hero whence
 Salvation dawns o'er that mad misery of
 his isle.
 Yes, she imparts to him, by what a
 pranksome wile
 He may surprise her sire, asleep beneath a
 rock,
 When he has told their tale, amid his web-
 foot flock
 Of sea-beasts, "fine fat seals with bitter
 breath!" laughs she
 At whom she likes to save, no less:
 Eidotheé,
 Whom you shall never face evolved, in
 earth, in air,
 In wave; but, manifest i' the soul's do-
 main, why, there
 She ravishingly moves to meet you, all
 through aid
 O' the soul! Bid shine what should, dis-
 miss into the shade
 What should not be, — and there triumphs
 the paramount
 Emprise o' the Master! But, attempt to
 make account
 Of what the sense, without soul's help,
 perceives? I bought
 That work — (despite plain proof, whose
 hand it was had wrought
 I' the rough: I think we trace the tool of
 triple tooth,
 Here, there and everywhere) — bought
 dearly that uncouth
 Unwieldy bulk, for just ten dollars —
 "Bulk, would fetch —
 Converted into lime — some five pauls!"
 grinned a wretch.

Who, bound on business, paused to hear
the bargaining,
And would have pitied me "but for the
fun o' the thing!"

LIII.

Shall such a wretch be — you? Must
— while I show Elvire
Shaming all other forms, seen as I see her
here
I' the soul, — this other-you perversely
look outside,
And ask me, "Where i' the world is charm
to be described
I' the tall thin personage, with paled eye,
pensive face,
Any amount of love, and some remains of
grace?"
See yourself in my soul!

LIV.

And what a world for each
Must somehow be i' the soul, — accept
that mode of speech, —
Whether an aura gird the soul, wherein
it seems
To float and move, a belt of all the glints
and gleams
It struck from out that world, its weaklier
fellows found
So dead and cold; or whether these not
so much surround,
As pass into the soul itself, add worth to
worth,
As wine enriches blood, and straightway
send it forth,
Conquering and to conquer, through all
eternity,
That's battle without end.

LV.

I search but cannot see
What purpose serves the soul that strives,
or world it tries
Conclusions with, unless the fruit of
victories
Stay, one and all, stored up and guar-
anteed its own
For ever, by some mode whereby shall be
made known
The gain of every life. Death reads the
title clear —
What each soul for itself conquered from
out things here:
Since, in the seeing soul, all worth lies, I
assert, —
And nought i' the world, which, save for
soul that sees, inert
Was, is, and would be ever, — stuff for
transmuting, — null
And void until man's breath evoke the
beautiful —

But, touched aright, prompt yields each
particle its tongue
Of elemental flame, — no matter whence
flame sprung
From gums and spice, or else from straw
and rottenness,
So long as soul has power to make them
burn, express
What lights and warms henceforth, leaves
only ash behind,
Howe'er the chance: if soul be privileged
to find
Food so soon that, by first snatch of eye,
suck of breath,
It can absorb pure life: or, rather, meeting
death
I' the shape of ugliness, by fortunate re-
coil
So put on its resource, it find therein a foil
For a new birth of life, the challenged
soul's response
To ugliness and death, — creation for the 44
nonce.

LVI.

I gather heart through just such con-
quests of the soul,
Through evocation out of that which, on
the whole,
Was rough, ungainly, partial accomplish-
ment, at best,
And — what, at worst, save failure to spit
at and detest? —
— Through transference of all, achieved in
visible things,
To where, secured from wrong, rest soul's
imaginings —
Through ardour to bring help just where
completion halts,
Do justice to the purpose, ignore the slips
and faults —
And, last, through waging with deformity
a fight
Which wrings thence, at the end, precise its 50
opposite.
I praise the loyalty o' the scholar, — stung
by taunt
Of fools "Does this evince thy Master
men so vaunt?
Did he then perpetrate the plain abortion
here?"
Who cries "His work am I! full fraught
by him, I clear
His fame from each result of accident and
time,
Myself restore his work to its fresh morn-
ing-prime,
Not daring touch the mass of marble,
fools deride,
But putting my idea in plaster by its
side,
His, since mine; I, he made, vindicate who
made me!"

LVIII.

For, you must know, I too achieved
Eidotheé,
In silence and by night — dared justify the
lines
Plain to my soul, although, to sense, that
triple-time's
Achievement halt half-way, break down,
or leave a blank.
If she stood forth at last, the Master was to
thank!
Yet may there not have smiled approval
in his eyes —
That one at least was left who, born to
recognise
Perfection in the piece imperfect, worked,
that night,
In silence, such his faith, until the apposite
10 Design was out of him, truth palpable
once more?
And then, — for at one blow, its frag-
ments strewed the floor, —
Recalled the same to live within his soul
as heretofore.

LVIII.

And, even as I hold and have Eidotheé,
I say, I cannot think that gain, — which
would not be
Except a special soul had gained it, —
that such gain
Can ever be estranged, do aught but ap-
pertain
Immortally, by right firm, indefeasible,
To who performed the feat, through God's
grace and man's will!
Gain, never shared by those who practised
with earth's stuff,
20 And spoiled whate'er they touched, leaving
its roughness rough,
Its blankness bare, and, when the ugliness
opposed,
Either struck work or laughed "He doted
or he dozed"

LIX.

While, oh, how all the more will love
become intense
Hereafter, when "to love" means yearn-
ing to dispense,
Each soul, its own amount of gain through
its own mode
Of practising with life, upon some soul
which owed
Its treasure, all diverse and yet in worth
the same,
To new work and changed way! Things
furnish you rose-flame,
Which burn up red, green, blue, nay,
yellow more than needs.
30 For me, I nowise doubt: why doubt a time
succeeds

When each one may impart, and each re-
ceive, both share
The chemic secret, learn, — where I lit
force, why there.
You drew forth lambent pity, — where I
found only food
For self-indulgence, you still blew a spark
it brood
I the greyest ember, stopped not till self-
sacrifice imbued
Heaven's face with flame? What joy,
when each may supplement
The other, changing each as changed, till,
wholly blent,
Our old things shall be new, and, what we
both ignite,
Fuse, lose the varicolour in achromatic
white!
Exemplifying law, apparent even now
In the eternal progress, — love's law, 40
which I avow
And thus would formulate: each soul
lives, longs and works
For itself, by itself, — because a lodestar
lurks,
An other than itself, — in whatsoe'er the
niche
Of mistiest heaven it hide, whoe'er the
Glimdaldich
May grasp the Gulliver: or it, or he, or
she —
*Theosutos e broteios eper kekramene,*¹ —
(For fun's sake, where the phrase has
fastened, leave it fixed!
So soft it says, — "God, man, or both to-
gether mixed"!)
This, guessed at through the flesh, by 50
parts which prove the whole,
This constitutes the soul discernible by
soul
— Elvire, by me!

LX.

"And then" — (pray you, permit
remain
This hand upon my arm! — your cheek
dried, if you deign,
Choosing my shoulder) — "then" —
(Stand up for, boldly state
The objection in its length and breadth!)
"you abdicate,
With least yet on your lip, soul's empire,
and accept
The rule of sense: the Man, from mon-
arch's throne has stepped —
Leapt, rather, at one bound, to base, and
there lies, Brute.
You talk of soul, — how soul, in search 60
of soul to suit,
Must needs review the sex, the army, rank
and file
Of womankind, report no face nor form
so vile

¹ See "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus.

But that a certain worth, by certain signs,
 may thence
 Evolve itself and stand confessed — to
 soul — by sense.
 Sense? Oh, the loyal bee endeavours for
 the hive!
 Disinterested hunts the flower-field
 through, alive
 Not one mean moment, no, — suppose on
 flower he light, —
 To his peculiar drop, petal-dew per-
 quisite,
 Matter-of-course snatched snack: unless
 he taste, how try?
 This, light on tongue-tip laid, allows him
 pack his thigh,
 Transport all he counts prize, provision
 for the comb,
 Food for the future day, — a banquet, but
 at home!
 Soul? Ere you reach Fifine's, some flesh
 may be to pass!
 That bombed brow, that eye, a kindling
 chrysopras,
 Beneath its stiff black lash, inquisitive
 how speeds
 Each functionary limb, how play of foot
 succeeds,
 And how you let escape or duly sympa-
 thise
 With gastroknemian¹ grace, — true, your
 soul tastes and tries,
 And trifles time with these, but, fear not,
 will arrive
 At essence in the core, bring honey home
 to hive,
 Brain-stock and heart-stuff both — to
 strike objectors dumb —
 Since only soul affords the soul fit pabu-
 lum!
 Be frank for charity! Who is it you de-
 ceive —
 Yourself or me or God, with all this make-
 believe?"

LXI.

And frank I will respond as you inter-
 rogate.
 Ah, Music, wouldst thou help! Words
 struggle with the weight
 So feebly of the False, thick element be-
 tween
 Our soul, the True, and Truth! which,
 but that intervene
 False shows of things, were reached as
 easily by thought
 Reducible to word, as now by yearnings
 wrought
 Up with thy fine free force, oh Music, that
 canst thrid,
 Electrically win a passage through the lid
 Of earthly sepulchre, our words may push
 against,

¹ Pertaining to the calf of the leg.

Hardly transpierce as thou! Not dis-
 sipate, thou deign'st,
 So much as tricksily elude what words at-
 tempt
 To heave away, i' the mass, and let the
 soul, exempt
 From all that vapoury obstruction, view,
 instead
 Of glimmer underneath, a glory overhead.
 Not feebly, like our phrase, against the
 barrier go
 In suspirative swell the authentic notes I
 know,
 By help whereof, I would our souls were
 found without
 The pale, above the dense and dim which
 breeds the doubt!
 But Music, dumb for you, withdraws her
 help from me;
 And, since to weary words recourse again
 must be,
 At least permit they rest their burthen here
 and there,
 Music-like: cover space! My answer, —
 need you care
 If it exceed the bounds, reply to question-
 ing
 You never meant should plague? Once
 fairly on the wing,
 Let me flap far and wide!

LXII.

For this is just the time,
 The place, the mood in you and me, when
 all things chime.
 Clash forth life's common chord, whence,
 list how there ascend
 Harmonics far and faint, till our percep-
 tion end, —
 Reverberated notes whence we construct
 the scale
 Embracing what we know and feel and
 are! How fail
 To find or, better, lose your question, in
 this quick
 Reply which nature yields, ample and
 catholic?
 For, arm in arm, we two have reached,
 nay, passed, you see,
 The village-precinct; sun sets mild on
 Sainte Marie —
 We only catch the spire, and yet I seem to
 know
 What's hid i' the turn o' the hill: how all
 the graves must glow
 Soberly, as each warms its little iron
 cross,
 Flourished about with gold, and graced
 (if private loss
 Be fresh) with stiff rope-wreath of yellow
 crisp bead-blooms
 Which tempt down birds to pay their sup-
 per, mid the tombs,

With prattle good as song, amuse the dead
awhile,
If couched they hear beneath the matted
camomile!

LXIII.

Bid them good-bye before last friend has
sung and supped!
Because we pick our path and need our
eyes, — abrupt
Descent enough, — but here's the beach,
and there's the bay,
And, opposite, the streak of Île Noir-
moutier.
Thither the waters tend; they freshen as
they haste,
At feel o' the night-wind, though, by cliff
and cliff embraced,
This breadth of blue retains its self-pos-
session still;
10 As you and I intend to do, who take our
fill
Of sights and sounds — soft sound, the
countless hum and skip
Of insects we disturb, and that good fellow-
ship
Of rabbits our foot-fall sends huddling,
each to hide
He best knows how and where; and what
whirred past, wings wide?
That was an owl, their young may justlier
apprehend!
Though you refuse to speak, your beating
heart, my friend,
I feel against my arm, — though your
bent head forbids
A look into your eyes, yet, on my cheek,
their lids
That ope and shut, soft send a silken thrill
the same.
20 Well, out of all and each these nothings,
comes — what came
Often enough before, the something that
would aim
Once more at the old mark: the impulse
to at last
Succeed where hitherto was failure in the
past,
And yet again essay the adventure.
Clearlier sings
No bird to its couched corpse "Into the
truth of things —
Out of their falseness rise, and reach thou,
and remain!"

LXIV.

"That rise into the true out of the false
— explain?"
May an example serve? In yonder bay I
bathed,
This sunny morning: swam my best, then
hung, half swathed
30 With chill, and half with warmth, i' the
channel's midmost deep:

You know how one — not treads, but
stands in water? Keep
Body and limbs below, hold head back,
uplift chin,
And, for the rest, leave care! If brow,
eyes, mouth, should win
Their freedom, — excellent! If they must
brook the surge,
No matter though they sink, let but the
nose emerge.
So, all of me in brine lay soaking: did I
care
One jot? I kept alive by man's due breath
of air
I' the nostrils, high and dry. At times,
o'er these would run
The ripple, even wash the wavelet, —
morning's sun
Tempted advance, no doubt: and always 40
flash of froth,
Fish-outbreak, bubbling by, would find
me nothing loth
To rise and look around; then all was
overswept
With dark and death at once. But trust
the old adept!
Back went again the head, a merest motion
made,
Fin-fashion, either hand, and nostril soon
conveyed
Assurance light and life were still in reach
as erst:
Always the last and, — wait and watch, —
sometimes the first.
Try to ascend breast-high? wave arms
wide free of tether?
Be in the air and leave the water altogether?
Under went all again, till I resigned myself 50
To only breathe the air, that's footed by an
elf,
And only swim the water, that's native to
a fish.
But there is no denying that, ere I curbed
my wish,
And schooled my restive arms, salt en-
tered mouth and eyes
Often enough — sun, sky, and air so tan-
talise!
Still, the adept swims, this accorded, that
denied;
Can always breathe, sometimes see and
be satisfied!

LXV.

I liken to this play o' the body, — fruit-
less strife
To slip the sea and hold the heaven, — my
spirit's life
'Twixt false, whence it would break, and 60
true, where it would bide.
I move in, yet resist, am upborne every
side
By what I beat against, an element too
gross

To live in, did not soul duly obtain her
dose
Of life-breath, and inhale from truth's
pure plenitude
Above her, snatch and gain enough to just
illude
With hope that some brave bound may
baffle evermore
The obstructing medium, make who swam
henceforward soar:
— Gain scarcely snatched when, foiled by
the very effort, sowse,
Underneath ducks the soul, her truthward
yearnings dowse
Deeper in falsehood I ay, but fitted less and
less
To bear in nose and mouth old briny
bitterness
Proved alien more and more: since each
experience proves
Air — the essential good, not sea, wherein
who moves
Must thence, in the act, escape, apart from
will or wish.
Move a mere hand to take waterweed,
jelly-fish,
Upward you tend! And yet our business
with the sea
Is not with air, but just o' the water,
watery:
We must endure the false, no particle of
which
Do we acquaint us with, but up we mount
a pitch
Above it, find our head reach truth, while
hands explore
The false below: so much while here we
bathe, — no more!

LXVI.

Now, there is one prime point (hear and
be edified!)
One truth more true for me than any truth
beside —
To-wit, that I am I, who have the power to
swim,
The skill to understand the law whereby
each limb
May bear to keep immersed, since, in
return, made sure
That its mere movement lifts head clean
through coverture.
By practice with the false, I reach the true?
Why, thence
It follows, that the more I gain self-con-
fidence,
Get proof I know the trick, can float, sink,
rise, at will,
The better I submit to what I have the skill
To conquer in my turn, even now, and by
and by
Leave wholly for the land, and there laugh,
shake me dry

To last drop, saturate with noonday — no
need more
Of wet and fret, plagued once: on Pornic's
placid shore,
Abundant air to breathe, sufficient sun
to feel!
Meantime I buoy myself: no whit my
senses reel
When over me there breaks a billow; nor,
elate
Too much by some brief taste, I quaff in-
temperate
The air, o'ertop breast-high the wave-
environment.
Full well I know the thing I grasp, as if
intent
To hold, — my wandering wave, will not
be grasped at all:
The solid-seeming grasped, the handful
great or small
Must go to nothing, glide through fingers
fast enough;
But none the less, to treat liquidity as
stuff —
Though failure — certainly succeeds be-
yond its aim,
Sends head above, past thing that hands
miss, all the same.

LXVII.

So with this wash o' the world, wherein
life-long we drift;
We push and paddle through the foam by
making shift
To breathe above at whiles when, after
deepest duck
Down underneath the show, we put forth
hand and pluck
At what seems somehow like reality — 50
a soul.
I catch at this and that, to capture and
control,
Presume I hold a prize, discover that my
pains
Are run to nought: my hands are baulked,
my head regains
The surface where I breathe and look
about, a space.
The soul that helped me mount? Swal-
lowed up in the race
O' the tide, come who knows whence, gone
gaily who knows where!
I thought the prize was mine; I flattered
myself there.
It did its duty, though: I felt it, it felt me,
Or, where I look about and breathe, I
should not be.
The main point is — the false fluidity was 60
bound
Acknowledge that it frothed o'er substance,
nowise found
Fluid, but firm and true. Man, outcast,
"howls," — at rods? —

If "sent in playful spray a-shivering to his gods!"

Childishest childe, man makes thereby no bad exchange.

Stay with the flat-fish, thou! We like the upper range

Where the "gods" live, perchance the dæmons also dwell:

Where operates a Power, which every throb and swell

Of human heart invites that human soul approach,

"Sent" near and nearer still, however "spray" encroach

On "shivering" flesh below, to altitudes, which gained,

Evil proves good, wrong right, obscurity explained,

10 And "howling" childishness. Whose howl have we to thank,

If all the dogs'gan bark and puppies whine, till sank

Each yelpers' tail 'twixt legs? for Huntsman Common-sense

Came to the rescue, bade prompt thwack of thong dispense

Quiet i' the kennel; taught that ocean might be blue,

And rolling and much more, and yet the soul have, too,

Its touch of God's own flame, which He may so expand

"Who measured the waters i' the hollow of His hand"

That ocean's self shall dry, turn dew-drop in respect

20 Of all-triumphant fire, matter with intellect Once fairly matched; bade him who egged on hounds to bay,

Go curse, i' the poultry yard, his kind: "there let him lay"¹

The swan's one addled egg: which yet shall put to use,

Rub breast-bone warm against, so many a sterile goose!

LXVIII.

No, I want sky not sea, prefer the larks to shrimps,

And never dive so deep but that I get a glimpse

O' the blue above, a breath of the air around. Elvire,

I seize — by catching at the melted beryl here,

The tawny hair that just has trickled off, — Fifiue!

Did not we two trip forth to just enjoy the scene,

30 The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers on their stage,

¹ Compare "Childe Harold," verse clxxx.

Drawn up and under arms, and ready to engage —

Dabble, and there an end, with foam and froth o'er face,

Till suddenly Fifiue suggested change of place?

Now we taste æther, scorn the wave, and interchange apace

No ordinary thoughts, but such as evidence

The cultivated mind in both. On what pretence

Are you and I to sneer at who lent help to hand,

And gave the lucky lift?

LXIX.

Still sour? I understand!

One ugly circumstance discredits my fair plan —

That Woman does the work: I waive the help of Man.

"Why should experiment be tried with only waves,

When solid spars float round? Still some Thalassia saves

Too pertinaciously, as though no Triton, bluff

As e'er blew brine from conch, were free to help enough!

Surely, to recognise a man, his mates serve best!

Why is there not the same or greater interest

In the strong spouse as in the pretty partner, pray,

Were recognition just your object, as you say,

Amid this element o' the false?"

LXX.

We come to terms.

I need to be proved true; and nothing so confirms

One's faith in the prime point that one's alive, not dead,

In all Descents to Hell whereof I ever read, As when a phantom there, male enemy or friend,

Or merely stranger-shade, is struck, is forced suspend

His passage: "You that breathe, along with us the ghosts?"

Here, why must it be still a woman that accosts?

LXXI.

Because, one woman's worth, in that respect, such hairy hosts

Of the other sex and sort! Men? Say you have the power

To make them yours, rule men, throughout life's little hour.

According to the phrase; what follows?

Men, you make,

By ruling them, your own: each man for his own sake

Accepts you as his guide, avails him of what worth

He apprehends in you to sublimate his earth

With fire: content, if so you convoy him through night,

That you shall play the sun, and he, the satellite,

Pilfer your light and heat and virtue, starry pelf,

While, caught up by your course, he turns upon himself.

Women rush into you, and there remain absorbed.

10 Beside, 'tis only men completely formed, full-orbed,

Are fit to follow track, keep pace, illustrate so

The leader: any sort of woman may bestow Her atom on the star, or clod she counts for such, —

Each little making less bigger by just that much.

Women grow you, while men depend on you at best.

And what dependence! Bring and put him to the test,

Your specimen disciple, a handbreadth separate

From you, he almost seemed to touch before! Abate

Complacency you will, I judge, at what's divulged!

20 Some flabbiness you fixed, some vacancy outbulged,

Some — much — nay, all, perhaps, the outward man's your work:

But, inside man? — find him wherever he may lurk,

And where's a touch of you in his true self?

LXXII.

I wish

Some wind would waft this way a glassy bubble-fish

O' the kind the sea inflates, and show you, once detached

From wave . . . or no, the event is better told than watched:

Still may the thing float free, globose and opaline

All over, save where just the amethysts combine

To blue their best, rim-round the sea-flower with a tinge

30 Earth's violet never knew! Well, 'neath that gem-tipped fringe,

A head lurks — of a kind — that acts as stomach too;

Then comes the emptiness which out the water blew

So big and belly-like, but, dry of water drained,

Withers away nine-tenths. Ah, but a tenth remained!

That was the creature's self: no more akin to sea,

Poor rudimental head and stomach, you agree,

Than sea's akin to sun who yonder dips his edge.

LXXIII.

But take the rill which ends a race o'er yonder ledge

O' the fissured cliff, to find its fate in smoke below!

Disengage that, and ask — what news of 40 life, you know

It led, that long lone way, through pasture, plain and waste?

All's gone to give the seal no touch of earth, no taste

Of air, reserved to tell how rushes used to bring

The butterfly and bee, and fisher-bird that's king

O' the purple kind, about the snow-soft silver-sweet

Infant of mist and dew; only these atoms fleet,

Embittered evermore, to make the sea one drop

More big thereby — if thought keep count where sense must stop.

LXXIV.

The full-blown ingrate, mere recipient of the brine,

That takes all and gives nought, is Man; 50 the feminine

Rillet that, taking all and giving nought in turn,

Goes headlong to her death i' the sea, without concern

For the old inland life, snow-soft and silver-clear,

That's woman — typified from Fifine to Elvire.

LXXV.

Then, how diverse the modes prescribed to who would deal

With either kind of creature! 'Tis Man, you seek to seal

Your very own? Resolve, for first step, to discard

Nine-tenths of what you are! To make, you must be marred, —

To raise your race, must stoop, — to teach them aught, must learn

Ignorance, meet half-way what most you 60 hope to spurn

I' the sequel. Change yourself, dissimulate the thought
 And vulgarise the word, and see the deed be brought
 To look like nothing done with any such intent
 As teach men — though perchance it teach, by accident!
 So may you master men: assured that if you show
 One point of mastery, departure from the low
 And level, — head or heart-revolt at long disguise,
 Immurement, stifling soul in mediocrities, —
 If inadvertently a gesture, much more, word
 10 Reveal the hunter no companion for the herd,
 His chance of capture's gone. Success means, they may snuff,
 Examine, and report, — a brother, sure enough,
 Disports him in brute-guise; for skin is truly skin,
 Horns, hoofs are hoofs and horns, and all, outside and in,
 Is veritable beast, whom fellow-beasts resigned
 May follow, made a prize in honest pride, behind
 One of themselves and not creation's upstart lord!
 Well, there's your prize i' the pound — much joy may it afford
 My Indian! Make survey and tell me, — was it worth
 20 You acted part so well, went all-fours upon earth
 The live-long day, brayed, belled, and all to bring to pass
 That stags should deign eat hay when winter stints them grass?

LXXVI.

So much for men, and how disguise may make them mind
 Their master. But you have to deal with womankind?
 Abandon stratagem for strategy! Cast quite
 The vile disguise away, try truth clean-opposite
 Such creep-and-crawl, stand forth all man and, might it chance,
 Somewhat of angel too! — whate'er inheritance,
 Actual on earth, in heaven prospective, be your boast,
 1 Lay claim to! Your best self revealed at uttermost, —
 That's the wise way o' the strong! And e'en should falsehood tempt

The weaker sort to swerve, — at least the lie's exempt
 From slur, that's loathlier still, of aiming to debase
 Rather than elevate its object. Mimic grace,
 Not make deformity your mask! Be sick by stealth,
 Nor traffic with disease — malingering in health!
 No more of: "Countrymen, I boast me one like you —
 My lot, the common strength, the common weakness too!
 I think the thoughts you think; and if I have the knack
 Of fitting thoughts to words, you peradventure lack,
 Envy me not the chance, yourselves more fortunate!
 Many the loaded ship self-sunk through treasure-freight,
 Many the pregnant brain brought never child to birth,
 Many the great heart broke beneath its girdle-girth!
 Be mine the privilege to supplement defect,
 Give dumbness voice, and let the labouring intellect
 Find utterance in word, or possibly in deed!
 What though I seem to go before? 'tis you that lead!
 I follow what I see so plain — the general mind
 Projected pillar-wise, flame kindled by the 50 kind,
 Which dwarfs the unit — me — to insignificance!
 Halt you, I stop forthwith, — proceed, I too advance!"

LXXVII.

Ay, that's the way to take with men you wish to lead,
 Instruct and benefit. Small prospect you succeed
 With women so! Be all that's great and good and wise,
 August, sublime — swell out your frog the right ox-size —
 He's buoyed like a balloon, to soar, not burst, you'll see!
 The more you prove yourself, less fear the prize will flee
 The captor. Here you start after no pompous stag
 Who condescends be snared, with toss of 60 horn, and brag
 Of bray, and ramp of hoof; you have not to subdue
 The foe through letting him imagine he snares you!
 'Tis rather with . . .

LXXVIII.

Ah, thanks! quick!—

where the dipping disk

Shows red against the rise and fall o' the
fin! there frisk

In shoal the — porpoises? Dolphins, they
shall and must

Cut through the freshening clear — dol-
phins, my instance just!

'Tis fable, therefore truth: who has to do
with these,

Needs never practise trick of going hands
and knees

As beasts require. Art fain the fish to
captivate?

Gather thy greatness round, Arion! Stand
in state,

As when the banqueting thrilled conscious
— like a rose

10 Throughout its hundred leaves at that
approach it knows

Of music in the bird — while Corinth grew
one breast

A-throb for song and thee; nay, Periander¹
pressed

The Methymnæan² hand, and felt a king
indeed, and guessed

How Phœbus' self might give that great
mouth of the gods

Such a magnificence of song! The pillar
nods,

Rocks roof, and trembles door, gigantic,
post and jamb,

As harp and voice rend air — the shattering
dithyramb!³

So stand thou, and assume the robe that
tingles yet

With triumph; strike the harp, whose
every golden fret

20 Still smoulders with the flame, was late
at fingers' end —

So, standing on the bench o' the ship, let
voice expend

Thy soul, sing, unalloyed by meaner mode,
thine own,

The Orthian lay; then leap from music's
lofty throne,

Into the lowest surge, make fearlessly thy
launch!

Whatever storm may threat, some dolphin
will be staunch!

Whatever roughness rage, some exquisite
sea-thing

Will surely rise to save, will bear — pal-
pitating —

One proud humility of love beneath its
load —

Stem tide, part wave, till both roll on, thy
jewell'd road

¹ Tyrant of Corinth.

² Arion was born at Methymna, in Lesbos.
Lyrical chorus.

Of triumph, and the grim o' the gulph 30
grow wonder-white

I' the phosphorescent wake; and still the
exquisite

Sea-thing stems on, saves still, palpitatingly
thus,

Lands safe at length its load of love at
Tænarus,⁴

True woman-creature!

LXXIX.

Man? Ah, would you prove what power

Marks man, — what fruit his tree may
yield, beyond the sour

And stunted crab, he calls love-apple, which
remains

After you toil and moil your utmost, —
all, love gains

By lavishing manure? — try quite the
other plan!

And, to obtain the strong true product of
a man,

Set him to hate a little! Leave cherishing
his root,

And rather prune his branch, nip off the
pettiest shoot

Superfluous on his bough! I promise, you
shall learn

By what grace came the goat, of all beasts
else, to earn

Such favour with the god o' the grape:
'twas only he

Who, browsing on its tops, first stung
fertility

Into the stock's heart, stayed much growth
of tendril-twine,

Some faintish flower, perhaps, but gained
the indignant wine,

Wrath of the red press! Catch the puniest
of the kind —

Man-animalcule, starved body, stunted
mind,

And, as you nip the blotch 'twixt thumb 50
and finger-nail,

Admire how heaven above and earth below
avail

No jot to soothe the mite, sore at God's
prime offence

In making mites at all, — coax from its
impotence

One virile drop of thought, of word, or
deed, by strain

To propagate for once — which nature
rendered vain,

Who lets first failure stay, yet cares not to
record

Mistake that seems to cast opprobrium on
the Lord!

Such were the gain from love's best pains!
But let the elf

⁴ The spot whither the dolphin carried Arion
on his way to Corinth,

Be touched with hate, because some real
man bears himself
Manlike in body and soul, and, since he
lives, must thwart
And furify and set a-fizz this counterpart
O' the pismire that's surprised to effe-
vescence, if,
By chance, black bottle come in contact
with chalk cliff,
Acid with alkali! Then thrice the bulk,
out blows
Our insect, does its kind, and cuckoo-spits
some rose!

LXXX.

No — 'tis ungainly work, the ruling men,
at best!
The graceful instinct's right: 'tis women
stand confessed
Auxiliary, the gain that never goes away,
Takes nothing and gives all: Elvire, Fifine,
'tis they
Convince, — if little, much, no matter! —
one degree
The more, at least, convince unreasonable
me
That I am, anyhow, a truth, though all else
seem
And be not: if I dream, at least I know I
dream.
The falsity, beside, is fleeting: I can
stand
Still, and let truth come back, — your
steading touch of hand
Assists me to remain self-centred, fixed
amid
All on the move. Believe in me, at once
you bid
Myself believe that, since one soul has dis-
engaged
Mine from the shows of things, so much is
fact: I waged
No foolish warfare, then, with shades,
myself a shade,
Here in the world — may hope my pains
will be repaid!
How false things are, I judge: how change-
able, I learn
When, where and how it is I shall see truth
return,
That I expect to know, because Fifine
knows me! —
How much more, if Elvire!

LXXXI.

"And why not, only she?
Since there can be for each, one Best, no
more, such Best,
For body and mind of him, abolishes the
rest
O' the simply Good and Better. You
please select Elvire
To give you this belief in truth, dispel the
fear

Yourself are, after all, as false as what sur-
rounds;
And why not be content? When we two
watched the rounds
The boatman made, 'twixt shoal and sand-
bank, yesterday,
As, at dead slack of tide, he chose to push
his way,
With oar and pole, across the creek, and
reach the isle
After a world of pains — my word pro-
voked your smile,
Yet none the less deserved reply: "Twere
wiser wait
'The turn o' the tide, and find conveyance
for his freight —
'How easily — within the ship to purpose 44
moored,
'Managed by sails, not oars! But no, —
the man's allured
'By liking for the new and hard in his ex-
ploit!
'First come shall serve! He makes, —
courageous and adroit, —
'The merest willow-leaf of boat do duty,
bear
'His merchandise across: once over, needs
he care
'If folk arrive by ship, six hours hence,
fresh and gay?"
No: he scorns commonplace, affects the
unusual way;
And good Elvire is moored, with not a
breath to flap
The yards of her, no lift of ripple to o'erlap
Keel, much less, prow. What care? since 50
here's a cockle-shell,
Fifine, that's taut and crank, and carries
just as well
Such seamanship as yours!"

LXXXII.

Alack, our life is lent,
From first to last, the whole, for this ex-
periment
Of proving what I say — that we ourselves
are true!
I would there were one voyage, and then
no more to do
But tread the firmland, tempt the uncer-
tain sea no more.
I would we might dispense with change of
shore for shore
To evidence our skill, demonstrate — in
no dream
It was, we tidied o'er the trouble of the
stream.
I would the steady voyage, and not the 60
fitful trip, —
Elvire, and not Fifine, — might test our
seamanship.
But why expend one's breath to tell you,
change of boat

Mean change of tactics took. Come on
the same affair!
To-morrow, all the change, new stowage
fore and aft
O' the cargo; then, to cross requires new
sailor-craft!
To-day, one step from stern to bow keeps
boat in trim:
To-morrow, some big stone, — or woe to
that and him! —
Must ballast both. That man stands for
Mind, paramount
The vessel is adventure ay, however
you make account,
'Tis mind that navigates, — skips over,
twists between
The vessel is the rest, — now gives im-
portance to the mean.
And now, in the pursuit of life, acceptance,
fact,
Discards all fiction, — steers Fifine, and
cries, i' the act,
"Thou art so bad, and yet so delicate a
brown!
Wouldst tell no end of lies: I talk to smile
or frown!
Wouldst rob me: do men blame a squirrel,
lithe and sly,
For pilfering the nut she adds to board?
Nay!
Fifine is true, as truth, honesty — self, black
The worse! too safe the ship, the transport
there and back
Too certain, — may bill and lounge and
leave the helm,
Let wind and tide do work: no fear that
waves o'erwhelm
The steady-going bark, as sure to feel her
bill
Bound to cross, reach land, next year as
yesterday!
How can I but suspect, the true feat were
to sail
Down, — transfer myself to cockle-shell
from ship,
And try of trusting to sea tracklessness, I
dare
With me — and whose breast grew oak
and triple brass.
Was it need no degree of death, but, with
my eyes,
Surveyed the turgid main and its mon-
strous things
And muttered futile so, the prudent Power's
decrees
Of separate earth and disassociating sea:
Since, now is it observed, if impious vessels
sail
Across, and tempt a thing they should not
touch — the deep?
(See Homer to the boat, wherein, for
Athens bound,
When I sail must embark — Jove keep
him safe and sound! —

The great battle — fought, but not the victory
won.

Mean, surrounded by this so comfortable
ode.)

1833-III

Then, never grudge my poor Fifine her
compliment!
The rakish craft could slip her moorings
in the tent,
And, being a every sort of stranded can-
ny, steer
Through dunes, rocks and reefs, — so
fine, deposit here
Your Virgil of a spouse, in Attica: yea, 40
thrid
The mob of men, select the special virtue hid
In him, however, and say, — whatever, —
Of all the multitude, you — I prefer to
choose!
Are you for Athens bound? I can per-
form the trip,
Shove little pinnacle off, while yon superior
ship,
The Elvire, refits in port!" So, off we
push from beach
Of Pornic town, and lo, ere eye can wink,
we reach
The Long Walls, and I prove that Athens
is no dream,
For there the temples stand, they are, they
nowise seem.
Nay, not all one lie, the truth attracts me so
true!
Thanks therefore to Fifine! Elvire, I'm
back with you!
Share in the memories! Embark I trust
we shall
Together some fine day, and so, for good
and all,
Bid Pornic Town adieu, — then, just the
strait to cross,
And we reach harkness, safe, in Iustepha-
nos!
LXXXIV.
How quickly night comes! Lo, already
'tis the land
Turns sea-like; overcrept by grey, the
plains expand.
Assume significance; where ocean dwindles,
shrinks
Into a pettier bound: its splash and plaint,
methinks,
Six steps away, how both retire, as if their 60
part
Were played, another force were free to
prove her art,
Protagonist in turn! Are you unterrified?
All false, all fleeting too! And nowhere
things above.
And everywhere we strain that things
should say, — the one
Truth, that ourselves are true!

LXXXV.

- A word, and I have done.
Is it not just our hate of falsehood, fleet-
ingness,
And the mere part, things play, that con-
stitutes express
The inmost charm of this Fifine and all
her tribe?
Actors! We also act, but only they in-
scribe
Their style and title so, and preface, only
they,
Performance with "A lie is all we do or
say."
Wherein but there can be the attraction,
Falsehood's bribe,
That wins so surely o'er to Fifine and her
tribe
- 10 The liking, nay the love of who hate False-
hood most,
Except that these alone of mankind make
their boast
"Frankly, we simulate!" To feign,
means — to have grace
And so get gratitude! This ruler of the race,
Crowned, sceptred, stoled to suit, — 'tis
not that you detect
The cobbler in the king, but that he makes
effect
By seeming the reverse of what you know
to be
The man, the mind, whole form, fashion
and quality.
Mistake his false for true, one minute, —
there's an end
Of the admiration! Truth, we grieve at or
rejoice:
- 20 'Tis only falsehood, plain in gesture, look
and voice,
That brings the praise desired, since profit
comes thereby.
The histrionic truth is in the natural lie.
Because the man who wept the tears was,
all the time,
Happy enough; because the other man,
a-grime
With guilt, was, at the least, as white as I
and you;
Because the timid type of bashful maid-
hood, who
Starts at her own pure shade, already num-
bers seven
Born babes and, in a month, will turn their
odd to even;
Because the saucy prince would prove,
could you unfurl
- 30 Some yards of wrap, a meek and meritori-
ous girl —
Precisely as you see success attained by
each
O' the mimes, do you approve, not foolishly
impeach
The falsehood!

LXXXVI.

That's the first o' the truths
found: all things, slow
Or quick i' the passage, come at last to
that, you know!
Each has a false outside, whereby a truth
is forced
To issue from within: truth, falsehood,
are divorced
By the excepted eye, at the rare season, for
The happy moment. Life means — learn-
ing to abhor
The false, and love the true, truth treasured
snatch by snatch,
Waifs counted at their worth. And when 40
with strays they match
I' the parti-coloured world, — when, under
foul, shines fair,
And truth, displayed i' the point, flashes
forth everywhere
I' the circle, manifest to soul, though hid
from sense,
And no obstruction more affects this con-
fidence, —
When faith is ripe for sight, — why,
reasonably, then
Comes the great clearing-up. Wait three-
score years and ten!

LXXXVII.

Therefore I prize stage-play, the honest
cheating; thence
The impulse pricked, when life and drum
bade Fair commence,
To bid you trip and skip, link arm in arm
with me,
Like husband and like wife, and so together 50
see
The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers
on their stage
Drawn up and under arms, and ready to
engage.
And if I started thence upon abstruser
themes . . .
Well, 'twas a dream, pricked too!

LXXXVIII.

A poet never dreams:
We prose-folk always do: we miss the
proper duct
For thoughts on things unseen, which
stagnate and obstruct
The system, therefore; mind, sound in a
body sane,
Keeps thoughts apart from facts, and to
one flowing vein
Confines its sense of that which is not, but
might be,
And leaves the rest alone. What ghosts 60
do poets see?
What demons fear? what man or thing
misapprehend?

Unchoked, the channel's flush, the fancy's
 free to spend
 Its special self aright in manner, time and
 place.
 Never believe that who create the busy race
 O' the brain, bring poetry to birth, such
 act performed,
 Feel trouble them, the same, such residue
 as warmed
 My prosy blood, this morn, — intrusive
 fancies, meant
 For outbreak and escape by quite another
 vent!
 Whence follows that, asleep, my dreamings
 oft exceed
 The bound. But you shall hear.

LXXXIX.

I smoked. The webs o' the weed,
 10 With many a break i' the mesh, were float-
 ing to re-form
 Cupola-wise above: chased thither by soft
 warm
 Inflow of air without; since I — of mind
 to muse, to clench
 The gain of soul and body, got by their
 noon-day drench
 In sun and sea, — had flung both frames
 o' the window wide,
 To soak my body still and let soul soar
 beside.
 In came the country sounds and sights and
 smells — that fine
 Sharp needle in the nose from our ferment-
 ing wine!
 In came a dragon-fly with whirl and stir,
 then out,
 Off and away: in came, — kept coming,
 rather, — pout
 20 Succeeding smile, and take-away still close
 on give, —
 One loose long creeper-branch, tremblingly
 sensitive
 To risks which blooms and leaves, — each
 leaf tongue-broad, each bloom
 Mid target deep, — must run by prying in
 the room
 Of one who loves and grasps and spoils and
 speculates.
 All so far plain enough to sight and sense:
 but, weights,
 Measures and numbers, — ah, could one
 apply such test
 To other visitants that came at no request
 Of who kept open house, — to fancies
 manifold
 From this four-cornered world, the memo-
 ries new and old,
 30 The antenatal prime experience — what
 know I? —
 The initiatory love preparing us to die —
 Such were a crowd to count, a sight to see,
 a prize

To turn to profit, were but fleshly ears and
 eyes
 Able to cope with those o' the spirit!

XC.

Therefore, — since
 Thought hankers after speech, while no
 speech may evince
 Feeling like music, — mine, o'erburthened
 with each gift
 From every visitant, at last resolved to
 shift
 Its burthen to the back of some musician
 dead
 And gone, who feeling once what I feel
 now, instead
 Of words, sought sounds, and saved for 40
 ever, in the same,
 Truth that escapes prose, — nay, puts
 poetry to shame.
 I read the note, I strike the key, I bid
 record
 The instrument — thanks greet the veri-
 table word!
 And not in vain I urge: "O dead and gone
 away,
 Assist who struggles yet, thy strength
 become my stay,
 Thy record serve as well to register — I
 felt
 And knew thus much of truth! With me,
 must knowledge melt
 Into surmise and doubt and disbelief, un-
 less
 Thy music reassure — I gave no idle guess,
 But gained a certitude I yet may hardly 50
 keep!
 What care? since round is piled a monu-
 mental heap
 Of music that conserves the assurance, thou
 as well
 Wast certain of the same! thou, master
 of the spell,
 Mad'st moonbeams marble, didst record
 what other men
 Feel only to forget!" Who was it helped
 me, then?
 What master's work first came responsive
 to my call,
 Found my eye, fixed my choice?

XCI.

Why, Schumann's "Carnival!"
 My choice chimed in, you see, exactly with
 the sounds
 And sights of yestereve when, going on my
 rounds,
 Where both roads join the bridge, I heard 60
 across the dusk
 Creak a slow caravan, and saw arrive
 the husk
 O' the spice nut, which peeled off this
 morning, and displayed,

'Twixt tree and trée, a tent whence the red
pennon made
Its vivid reach for home and ocean-idle-
ness —
And where, my heart surmised, at that
same moment, — yes, —
Tugging her *tricot* on, — yet tenderly, lest
stitch
Announce the crack of doom, reveal
disaster which
Our Pornic's modest stock of merceries in
vain
Were ransacked to retrieve, — there, cau-
tiously a-strain,
(My heart surmised) must crouch in that
tent's corner, curved
Like Spring-month's russet moon, some
girl by fate reserved
10 To give me once again the electric snap and
spark
Which prove, when finger finds out finger
in the dark
O' the world, there's fire and life and
truth there, link but hands
And pass the secret on. Lo, link by link,
expands
The circle, lengthens out the chain, till one
embrace
Of high with low is found uniting the whole
race,
Not simply you and me and our Fifine, but
all
The world: the Fair expands into the
Carnival,
And Carnival again to . . . ah, but that's
my dream!

XCII.

I somehow played the piece: remarked
on each old theme
20 I' the new dress; saw how food o' the soul,
the stuff that's made
To furnish man with thought and feeling,
is purveyed
Substantially the same from age to age,
with change
Of the outside only for successive feasters.
Range
The banquet room o' the world, from the
dim farthest head
O' the table, to its foot, for you and me
bespread,
This merry morn, we find sufficient fare, I
trow.
But, novel? Scrape away the sauce; and
taste, below,
The verity o' the viand, — you shall per-
ceive there went
To board-head just the dish which other
condiment
30 Makes palatable now: guests came, sat
down, fell-to,
Rose up, wiped mouth, went way, — lived,
died, — and never knew

That generations yet should, seeking sus-
tenance,
Still find the selfsame fare, with somewhat
to enhance
Its flavour, in the kind of cooking. As
with hates
And loves and fears and hopes, so with
what emulates
The same, expresses hates, loves, fears and
hopes in Art:
The forms, the themes — no one without
its counterpart
Ages ago; no one but, mumbled the due
time
I' the mouth of the eater, needs be cooked
again in rhyme,
Dished up anew in paint, sauce-smoth-
ered fresh in sound,
To suit the wisdom-tooth, just cut, of the
age, that's found
With gums obtuse to gust and smack which
relished so
The meat o' the meal folk made some fifty
years ago.
But don't suppose the new was able to
efface
The old without a struggle, a pang! The
commonplace
Still clung about his heart, long after all the
rest
O' the natural man, at eye and ear, was
caught, confessed
The charm of change, although wry lip
and wrinkled nose
Owned ancient virtue more conducive to
repose
Than modern nothings roused to some-
things by some shred
Of pungency, perchance garlic in amber's
stead.
And so on, till one day, another age, by
due
Rotation, pries, sniffs, smacks, discovers
old is new,
And sauce, our sires pronounced insipid,
proves again
Sole piquant, may resume its titillating
reign —
With music, most of all the arts, since
change is there
The law, and not the lapse: the precious
means the rare,
And not the absolute in all good save
surprise.
So I remarked upon our Schumann's vic-
tories
Over the commonplace, how faded phrase
grew fine,
And palled perfection — piqued, upstartled
by that brine,
His pickle — bit the mouth and burnt the
tongue aright,
Beyond the merely good no longer ex-
quisite:

Then took things as I found, and thanked
without demur
The pretty piece — played through that
movement, you prefer,
Where dance and shuffle past, — he scold-
ing while she pouts,
She canting while he calms, — in those
eternal bouts
Of age, the dog — with youth, the cat —
by rose-festoon
Tied teasingly enough — Columbine, Pan-
talon:
She, toe-tips and *staccato*, — *legato* shakes
his poll
And shambles in pursuit, the senior. *Fi*
la jolle!
Lie to him! get his gold and pay its price!
begin
Your trade betimes, nor wait till you've
wed Harlequin
And need, at the week's end, to play the
duteous wife,
And swear you still love slaps and leapings
more than life!
Pretty! I say.

XCIII.

And so, I somehow-nohow played
The whole o' the pretty piece; and then
... whatever weighed
My eyes down, furred the films about my
wits? suppose,
The morning-bath, — the sweet monotony
of those
Three keys, flat, flat and flat, never a sharp
at all, —
Or else the brain's fatigue, forced even
here to fall
Into the same old track, and recognise the
shift
From old to new, and back to old again,
and, — swift
Or slow, no matter, — still the certainty of
change,
Conviction we shall find the false, where'er
we range,
In art no less than nature: or what if
wrist were numb,
And over-tense the muscle, abductor of the
thumb,
Taxed by those tenths' and twelfths' un-
conscionable stretch?
Howe'er it came to pass, I soon was far to
fetch —
Gone off in company with Music!

XCIV.

Whither bound
Except for Venice? She it was, by in-
stinct found
Carnival-country proper, who far below
the perch
Where I was pinnaced, showed, opposite,
Mark's Church,

And, underneath, Mark's Square, with
those two lines of street,
Procuratiè-sides, each leading to my feet —
Since from above I gazed, however I got
there.

XCV.

And what I gazed upon was a prodigious
Fair,
Concourse immense of men and women,
crowned or casqued,
Turbaned or tiar'd, wreathed, plumed,
hatted or wigged, but masked —
Always masked, — only, how? No face-
shape, beast or bird,
Nay, fish and reptile even, but some one
had preferred,
From out its frontispiece, feathered or
scaled or curled,
To make the vizard whence himself should 40
view the world,
And where the world believed himself was
manifest.
Yet when you came to look, mixed up
among the rest
More funnily by far, were masks to imi-
tate
Humanity's mishap: the wrinkled brow,
bald pate
And rheumy eyes of Age, peak'd chin and
parchment chap,
Were signs of day-work done, and wage-
time near, — mishap
Merely; but, Age reduced to simple greed
and guile,
Worn apathetic else as some smooth slab,
erewhile
A clear-cut man-at-arms 't the pavement,
till foot's tread
Effaced the sculpture, left the stone you 50
saw instead, —
Was not that terrible beyond the mere
uncouth?
Well, and perhaps the next revolting you
was Youth,
Stark ignorance and crude conceit, half
smirk, half stare
On that frank fool-face, gay beneath its
head of hair
Which covers nothing.

XCVI.

These, you are to understand,
Were the mere hard and sharp distinctions.
On each hand,
I soon became aware, flocked the infini-
tude
Of passions, loves and hates, man pampers
till his mood
Becomes himself, the whole sole face we
name him by,
Nor want denotement else, if age or youth 60
supply

The rest of him: old, young, — classed
 creature: in the main
 A love, a hate, a hope, a fear, each soul
 a-strain
 Some one way through the flesh — the
 face, an evidence
 O' the soul at work inside; and, all the
 more intense,
 So much the more grotesque.

XCVII.

"Why should each soul be tasked
 Some one way, by one love or else one
 hate?" I asked.
 When it occurred to me, from all these
 sights beneath
 There rose not any sound: a crowd, yet
 dumb as death!

XCVIII.

Soon I knew why. (Propose a riddle,
 and 'tis solved
 10 Forthwith — in dream!) They spoke;
 but, — since on me devolved
 To see, and understand by sight, — the
 vulgar speech
 Might be dispensed with. "He who
 cannot see, must reach
 As best he may the truth of men by help of
 words
 They please to speak, must fare at will of
 who affords
 The banquet," — so I thought. "Who
 sees not, hears and so
 Gets to believe; myself it is that, seeing,
 know,
 And, knowing, can dispense with voice
 and vanity
 Of speech. What hinders then, that,
 drawing closer, I
 Put privilege to use, see and know better
 still
 20 These *simulacra*, taste the profit of my
 skill,
 Down in the midst?"

XCIX.

And plumb I pitched into the square—
 A groundling like the rest. What think
 you happened there?
 Precise the contrary of what one would
 expect!
 For, — whereas so much more monstrosi-
 ties deflect
 From nature and the type, as you the more
 approach
 Their precinct, — here, I found brutality
 encroach
 Less on the human, lie the lightlier as I
 looked
 The nearer on these faces that seemed
 but now so crook'd

And clawed away from God's prime
 purpose. They diverged
 A little from the type, but somehow rather
 urged
 To pity than disgust: the prominent,
 before,
 Now dwindled into mere distinctness,
 nothing more.
 Still, at first sight, stood forth undoubtedly
 the fact
 Some deviation was: in no one case there
 lacked
 The certain sign and mark, — say hint,
 say, trick of lip
 Or twist of nose, — that proved a fault in
 workmanship,
 Change in the prime design, some hesi-
 tancy here
 And there, which checked the man and let
 the beast appear;
 But that was all.

C.

All: yet enough to bid each tongue
 Lie in abeyance still. They talked, them-
 selves among,
 Of themselves, to themselves; I saw the
 mouths at play,
 The gesture that enforced, the eye that
 strove to say
 The same thing as the voice, and seldom
 gained its point
 — That this was so, I saw; but all seemed
 out of joint
 I' the vocal medium 'twixt the world and
 me. I gained
 Knowledge by notice, not by giving ear, —
 attained
 To truth by what men seemed, not said:
 to me one glance
 Was worth whole histories of noisy utter-
 ance,
 — At least, to me in dream.

CI.

And presently I found
 That, just as ugliness had withered, so un-
 wound
 Itself, and perished off, repugnance to
 what wrong
 Might linger yet i' the make of man. My
 will was strong
 I' the matter; I could pick and choose,
 project my weight:
 (Remember how we saw the boatman trim
 his freight!)
 Determine to observe, or manage to es-
 cape,
 Or make divergency assume another
 shape
 By shift of point of sight in me the ob-
 server: thus
 Corrected, added to, subtracted from, —
 discuss

Each variant quality, and brute-beast
 touch was turned
 into mankind's safeguard! Force, guile,
 were arms which earned
 My praise, not blame at all: for we must
 learn to live,
 Case-hardened at all points, not bare and
 sensitive,
 But plated for defence, nay, furnished for
 attack,
 With spikes at the due place, that neither
 front nor back
 May suffer in that squeeze with nature, we
 find — life.
 Are we not here to learn the good of peace
 through strife,
 Of love through hate, and reach know-
 ledge by ignorance?
 Why, those are helps thereto, which late we
 eyed askance,
 And nicknamed unaware! Just so, a
 sword we call
 Superfluous, and cry out against, at fes-
 tival:
 Wear it in time of war, its clink and clatter
 grate
 O' the ear to purpose then!

CII.

I found, one must abate
 One's scorn of the soul's casing, distinct
 from the soul's self —
 Which is the centre-drop: whereas the
 pride in pelf,
 The lust to seem the thing it cannot be, the
 greed
 For praise, and all the rest seen outside, —
 these indeed
 Are the hard polished cold crystal environ-
 ment
 Of those strange orbs unearthed i' the
 Druid temple, meant
 For divination (so the learned please to
 think)
 Wherein you may admire one dew-drop
 roll and wink,
 All unaffected by — quite alien to —
 what sealed
 And saved it long ago: though how it got
 congealed
 I shall not give a guess, nor how, by power
 occult,
 The solid surface-shield was outcome and
 result
 Of simple dew at work to save itself amid
 The unwatery force around; protected
 thus, dew slid
 Safe through all opposites, impatient to
 absorb
 Its spot of life, and last for ever in the
 orb
 We, now, from hand to hand pass with
 impunity.

CIII.

And the delight wherewith I watch this
 crowd must be
 Akin to that which crowns the chemist
 when he winds
 Thread up and up, till clue be fairly
 clutched, — unbinds
 The composite, ties fast the simple to its
 mate,
 And, tracing each effect back to its cause,
 elate,
 Constructs in fancy, from the fewest primi-
 tives,
 The complex and complete, all diverse life,
 that lives
 Not only in beast, bird, fish, reptile, insect,
 but
 The very plants and earths and ores. Just 40
 so I glut
 My hunger both to be and know the thing
 I am,
 By contrast with the thing I am not; so,
 through sham
 And outside, I arrive at inmost real, probe
 And prove how the nude form obtained the
 chequered robe.

CIV.

— Experience, I am glad to master soon
 or late,
 Here, there and everywhere i' the world,
 without debate!
 Only, in Venice why? What reason for
 Mark's Square
 Rather than Timbuctoo?

CV.

And I became aware,
 Scarcely the word escaped my lips, that
 swift ensued
 In silence and by stealth, and yet with 50
 certitude,
 A formidable change of the amphitheatre
 Which held the Carnival; although the
 human stir
 Continued just the same amid that shift of
 scene.

CVI.

For as on edifice of cloud i' the grey and
 green
 Of evening, — built about some glory of
 the west,
 To barricade the sun's departure, — mani-
 fest,
 He plays, pre-eminently gold, gilds vapour,
 crag and crest
 Which bend in rapt suspense above the
 act and deed
 They cluster round and keep their very
 own, nor heed
 The world at watch; while we, breathlessly 60
 at the base

O' the castellated bulk, note momentarily the
mace
Of night fall here, fall there, bring change
with every blow,
Alike to sharpened shaft and broadened
portico
I' the structure: heights and depths, be-
neath the leaden stress,
Crumble and melt and mix together,
coalesce,
Re-form, but sadder still, subdued yet
more and more
By every fresh defeat, till wearied eyes
need pore
No longer on the dull impoverished deca-
dence
Of all that pomp of pile in towering evi-
dence
10 So lately: —

CVII.

Even thus nor otherwise, meseemed
That if I fixed my gaze awhile on what I
dreamed
Was Venice' Square, Mark's Church, the
scheme was straight unschemed,
A subtle something had its way within the
heart
Of each and every house I watched, with
counterpart
Of tremor through the front and outward
face, until
Mutation was at end; impassive and
stock-still
Stood now the ancient house, grown —
new, is scarce the phrase,
Since older, in a sense, — altered to . . .
what i' the ways,
Ourselves are wont to see, coerced by city,
town
20 Or village, anywhere i' the world, pace up
or down
Europe! In all the maze, no single
tenement
I saw, but I could claim acquaintance
with.

CVIII.

There went
Conviction to my soul, that what I took
of late
For Venice was the world; its Carnival —
the state
Of mankind, masquerade in life-long
permanence
For all time, and no one particular feast-
day. Whence
'Twas easy to infer what meant my late
disgust
At the brute-pageant, each grotesque of
greed and lust
And idle hate, and love as impotent for
good —
30 When from my pride of place I passed the
interlude

In critical review; and what, the wonder
that ensued
When, from such pinnaced pre-eminence,
I found
Somehow the proper goal for wisdom was
the ground
And not the sky, — so, slid sagaciously be-
times
Down heaven's baluster-rope, to reach the
mob of mimes
And mummers; whereby came discovery
there was just
Enough and not too much of hate, love,
greed and lust,
Could one discerningly but hold the
balance, shift
The weight from scale to scale, do justice
to the drift
Of nature, and explain the glories by the 40
shames
Mixed up in man, one stuff miscalled by
different names
According to what stage i' the process
turned his rough,
Even as I gazed, to smooth — only get close
enough!
— What was all this except the lesson of a
life?

CIX.

And — consequent upon the learning
how from strife
Grew peace — from evil, good — came
knowledge that, to get
Acquaintance with the way o' the world,
we must nor fret
Nor fume, on altitudes of self-suffi-
ciency,
But bid a frank farewell to what — we
think — should be,
And, with as good a grace, welcome 50
what is — we find.

CX.

Is — for the hour, observe! Since
something to my mind
Suggested soon the fancy, nay, certitude
that change,
Never suspending touch, continued to
derange
What architecture, we, walled up within
the cirque
O' the world, consider fixed as fate, not
fairy work.
For those were temples, sure, which trem-
blingly grew blank
From bright, then broke afresh in tri-
umph, — ah, but sank
As soon, for liquid change through artery
and vein
O' the very marble wound its way! And
first a stain
Would startle and offend amid the glory; 60
next,

Spot swift succeeded spot, but found me
 less perplexed
 By portents; then as 'twere a sleepiness
 soft stole
 Over the stately fane, and shadow sucked
 the whole
Façade into itself, made uniformly earth
 What was a piece of heaven; till, lo, a
 second birth,
 And the veil broke away because of some-
 thing new
 Inside, that pushed to gain an outlet,
 paused in view
 At last, and proved a growth of stone or
 brick or wood
 Which, alien to the aim o' the Builder,
 somehow stood
 The test, could satisfy, if not the early
 race
 For whom he built, at least our present
 populace,
 Who must not bear the blame for what,
 blamed, proves mishap
 Of the Artist: his work gone, another fills
 the gap,
 Serves the prime purpose so. Undoubt-
 edly there spreads
 Building around, above, which makes men
 lift their heads
 To look at, or look through, or look — for
 aught I care —
 Over: if only up, it is, not down, they stare,
 "Commercing with the skies," and not
 the pavement in the 'Square.

CXI.

But are they only temples that subdivide,
 collapse,
 And tower again, transformed? Aca-
 demies, perhaps!
 Domes where dwells Learning, seats of
 Science, bower and hall
 Which house Philosophy — do these, too,
 rise and fall,
 Based though foundations be on steadfast
 mother-earth,
 With no chimeric claim to supermundane
 birth,
 No boast that, dropped from cloud, they
 did not grow from ground?
 Why, these fare worst of all! these vanish
 and are found
 Nowhere, by who tasks eye some twice
 within his term
 Of threescore years and ten, for tidings
 what each germ
 Has burgeoned out into, whereof the
 promise stunned
 His ear with such acclaim, — praise-pay-
 ment to refund
 The praisers, never doubt, some twice
 before they die
 Whose days are long i' the land.

CXII.

Alack, Philosophy!
 Despite the chop and change, dimin-
 ished or increased,
 Patched up, and plastered o'er, religion
 stands at least
 I' the temple-type. But thou? Here
 gape I, all agog
 These thirty years, to learn how tadpole
 turns to frog;
 And thrice at least have gazed with mild
 astonishment,
 As, skyward up and up, some fire-new
 fabric sent
 Its challenge to mankind that, clustered
 underneath
 To hear the word, they straight believe, 44
 ay, in the teeth
 O' the Past, clap hands and hail trium-
 phant Truth's outbreak —
 Tadpole-frog-theory propounded past mis-
 take!
 In vain! A something ails the edifice, it
 bends,
 It bows, it buries . . . Hastel cry "Heads
 below" to friends —
 But have no fear they find, when smother
 shall subside,
 Some substitution perk with unabated
 pride
 I' the predecessor's place!

CXIII.

No, — the one voice which failed
 Never, the preachment's coign of vantage
 nothing ailed, —
 That had the luck to lodge i' the house not
 made with hands!
 And all it preached was this: "Truth 56
 builds upon the sands,
 Though stationed on a rock: and so her
 work decays,
 And so she builds afresh, with like result.
 Nought stays
 But just the fact that Truth not only is,
 but fain
 Would have men know she needs must be,
 by each so plain
 Attempt to visibly inhabit where they
 dwell."
 Her works are work, while she is she;
 that work does well
 Which lasts mankind their life-time
 through, and lets believe
 One generation more, that, though sand
 run through sieve,
 Yet earth now reached is rock, and what
 we moderns find
 Erected here is Truth, who, 'stablished to 64
 her mind

I' the fulness of the days, will never change
in show
More than in substance erst: men thought
they knew; we know!

CXIV.

Do you, my generation? Well, let the
blocks prove mist
I' the main enclosure, — church and col-
lege, if they list,
Be something for a time, and everything
anon,
And anything awhile, as fit is off or on,
Till they grow nothing, soon to re-appear
no less
As something, — shape re-shaped, till out
of shapelessness
Come shape again as sure! no doubt, or
round or square
10 Or polygon its front, some building will
be there,
Do duty in that nook o' the wall o' the
world where once
The Architect saw fit precisely to ensconce
College or church, and bid such bulwark
guard the line
O' the barrier round about, humanity's
confine.

CXV.

Leave watching change at work i' the
greater scale, on these
The main supports, and turn to their in-
terstices
Filled up by fabrics too, less costly and less
rare,
Yet of importance, yet essential to the
Fair
They help to circumscribe, instruct and
regulate!
20 See, where each booth-front boasts, in
letters small or great,
Its specialty, proclaims its privilege to
stop
A breach, beside the best!

CXVI.

Here History keeps shop,
Tells how past deeds were done, so and
not otherwise:
"Man! hold truth evermore! forget the
early lies!"
There sits Morality, demure behind her
stall,
Dealing out life and death: "This is the
thing to call
Right, and this other, wrong; thus think,
thus do, thus say,
Thus joy, thus suffer! — not to-day as
yesterday —
Yesterday's doctrine dead, this only shall
endure!
30 Obey its voice and live!" — enjoins the
dame demure.

While Art gives flag to breeze, bids drum
beat, trumpet blow,
Inviting eye and ear to yonder raree-show.
Up goes the canvas, hauled to height of
pole. I think,
We know the way — long lost, late
learned — to paint! A wink
Of eye, and lo, the pose! the statue on its
plinth!
How could we moderns miss the heart o'
the labyrinth
Perversely all these years, permit the
Greek seclude
His secret till to-day? And here's another
feud
Now happily composed: inspect this
quartett-score!
Got long past melody, no word has Music 44
To say to mortal man! But is the bard to
be more
Behindhand? Here's his book, and now
perhaps you see
At length what poetry can do!

CXVII.

Why, that's stability
Itself, that change on change we sorrow-
fully saw
Creep o'er the prouder piles! We ac-
quiesced in law
When the fine gold grew dim i' the temple,
when the brass
Which pillared that so brave abode where
Knowledge was,
Bowed and resigned the trust; but, bear
all this caprice,
Harlequinade where swift to birth suc-
ceeds decease
Of hue at every turn o' the tinsel-flag 50
which flames
While Art holds booth in Fair? Such
glories chased by shames
Like these, distract beyond the solemn
and august
Procedure to decay, evanishment in dust,
Of those marmoreal domes, — above
vicissitude,
We used to hope!

CXVIII.

"So, all is change, in fine," pursued
The preacher to a pause. When —
"All is permanence!"
Returned a voice. Within? without?
No matter whence
The explanation came: for, understand, I
ought
To simply say — "I saw," each thing I
say "I thought."
Since ever as, unrolled, the strange scene- 60
picture grew

• Marble-like.

Before me, sight flashed first, though
 mental comment too
 Would follow in a trice, come hobblingly
 to halt.

CXIX.

So, what did I see next but, — much as
 when the vault
 I' the west, — wherein we watch the va-
 poury manifold
 Transfiguration, — tired turns blaze to
 black, — behold,
 Peak reconciled to base, dark ending feud
 with bright,
 The multiform subsides, becomes the
 definite.
 Contrasting life and strife, where battle
 they i' the blank
 Severity of peace in death, for which we
 thank
 10 One wind that comes to quell the con-
 course, drive at last
 Things to a shape which suits the close of
 things, and cast
 Palpably o'er vexed earth heaven's mantle
 of repose?

CXX.

Just so, in Venice' Square, that things
 were at the close
 Was signalled to my sense; for I per-
 ceived arrest
 O' the change all round about, As if
 some impulse pressed
 Each gently into each, what was distinct-
 ness, late,
 Grew vague, and, line from line no longer
 separate,
 No matter what its style, edifice . . . shall
 I say,
 Died into edifice? I find no simpler
 way
 20 Of saying how, without or dash or shock
 or trace
 Of violence, I found unity in the place
 Of temple, tower, — nay, hall and house
 and hut, — one blank
 Severity of peace in death; to which they
 sank
 Resigned enough, till . . . ah, conjecture,
 I beseech,
 What special blank did they agree to, all
 and each?
 What common shape was that wherein
 they mutely merged
 Likes and dislikes of form, so plain before?

CXXI.

I urged
 Your step this way, prolonged our path of
 enterprise
 To where we stand at last, in order that
 your eyes
 30 Might see the very thing, and save my
 tongue describe

The Druid monument which fronts you.
 Could I bribe
 Nature to come in aid, illustrate what I
 mean,
 What wants there she should lend to
 solemnize the scene?

CXXII.

How does it strike you, this construction
 gaunt and grey
 Sole object, these piled stones, that gleam
 unground-away
 By twilight's hungry jaw, which champs
 fine all beside
 I' the solitary waste we grope through?
 Oh, no guide
 Need we to grope our way and reach the
 monstrous door
 Of granite! Take my word, the deeper
 you explore
 That caverned passage, filled with fancies 40
 to the brim,
 The less will you approve the adventure!
 such a grim
 Bar-sinister soon blocks abrupt your
 path, and ends
 All with a cold dread shape, — shape
 whereon Learning spends
 Labour, and leaves the text obscurer for
 the gloss,
 While Ignorance reads right — recoiling
 from that Cross!
 Whence came the mass and mass, strange
 quality of stone
 Unquarried anywhere i' the region round?
 Unknown!
 Just as unknown, how such enormity
 could be
 Conveyed by land, or else transported
 over sea,
 And laid in order, so, precisely each on 50
 each,
 As you and I would build a grotto where
 the beach
 Sheds shell — to last an hour: this build-
 ing lasts from age
 To age the same. But why?

CXXIII.

Ask Learning! I engage
 You get a prosy wherefore, shall help you
 to advance
 In knowledge just as much as helps you
 Ignorance
 Surmising, in the mouth of peasant-lad
 or lass,
 "I heard my father say he understood it was
 A building, people built as soon as earth
 was made
 Almost, because they might forget (they
 were afraid)
 Earth did not make itself, but came of 60
 Somebody.

They laboured that their work might last,
 and show thereby
 He stays, while we and earth, and all
 things come and go.
 Come whence? Go whither? That,
 when come and gone, we know
 Perhaps, but not while earth and all things
 need our best
 Attention: we must wait and die to know
 the rest.
 Ask, if that's true, what use in setting up
 the pile?
 'To make one fear and hope: remind us,
 all the while
 We come and go, outside there's Some-
 body that stays;
 A circumstance which ought to make us
 mind our ways,
 10 Because, — whatever end we answer by
 this life, —
 Next time, best chance must be for who,
 with toil and strife,
 Manages now to live most like what he
 was meant
 Become: since who succeeds so far, 'tis
 evident,
 Stands foremost on the file; who fails,
 has less to hope
 From new promotion. That's the rule —
 with even a rope
 Of mushrooms, like this rope I dangle!
 those that grew
 Greatest and roundest, all in life they had
 to do,
 Gain a reward, a grace they never dreamed,
 I think;
 Since, outside white as milk and inside
 black as ink,
 20 They go to the Great House to make a
 dainty dish
 For Don and Donna; while this basket-
 load, I wish
 Well off my arm, it breaks, — no starveling
 of the heap
 But had his share of dew, his proper
 length of sleep
 I' the sunshine: yet, of all, the outcome
 is — this queer
 Cribbed quantity of dwarfs which burthen
 basket here
 Till I reach home; 'tis there that, having
 run their rigs,
 They end their earthly race, are flung as
 food for pigs.
 Any more use I see? Well, you must
 know, there lies
 Something, the Curé says, that points to
 mysteries
 30 Above our grasp: a huge stone pillar,
 once upright,
 Now laid at length, half-lost — discreetly
 shunning sight
 I' the bush and briar, because of stories
 in the air —

Hints what it signified, and why was
 stationed there,
 Once on a time. In vain the Curé tasked
 his lungs —
 Showed, in a preachment, how, at bottom
 of the rungs
 O' the ladder, Jacob saw, where heavenly
 angels slept
 Up and down, lay a stone which served
 him, while he slept,
 For pillow; when he woke, he set the
 same upright
 As pillar, and atop poured oil: things re-
 quisite
 To instruct posterity, there mounts from
 floor to roof,
 A staircase, earth to heaven; and also put
 in proof,
 When we have scaled the sky, we well may
 let alone
 What raised us from the ground, and, —
 paying to the stone
 Proper respect, of course, — take staff
 and go our way,
 Leaving the Pagan night for Christian
 break of day.
 'For,' preached he, 'what they dreamed,
 these Pagans wide-awake
 'We Christians may behold. How
 strange, then, were mistake
 'Did anybody style the stone, — because
 of drop
 'Remaining there from oil which Jacob
 poured a-top, —
 'Itself the Gate of Heaven, itself the end, 50
 and not
 'The means thereto!' Thus preached the
 Curé, and no jot
 The more persuaded people but that, what
 once a thing
 Meant and had right to mean, it still must
 mean. So cling
 Folk somehow to the prime authoritative
 speech,
 And so distrust report, it seems as they
 could reach
 Far better the arch-word, whereon their
 fate depends,
 Through rude charactery, than all the
 grace it lends
 That lettering of your scribes! who
 flourish pen apace
 And ornament the text, they say — we say
 efface.
 Hence, when the earth began its life afresh 60
 in May,
 And fruit-trees bloomed, and waves would
 wanton, and the bay
 Ruffle its wealth of weed, and stranger-
 birds arrive,
 And beasts take each a mate, — folk, too,
 found sensitive,
 Surmised the old grey stone upright there,
 through such tracts

Of solitariness and silence, kept the facts
Entrusted it, could deal out doctrine, did
it please:

No fresh and frothy draught, but liquor on
the lees,

Strong, savage and sincere: first bleedings
from a vine

Whereof the product now do Curés so
refine

To insipidity, that, when heart sinks, we
strive

And strike from the old stone the old re-
storative.

‘Which is?’ — why, go and ask our
grandames how they used

To dance around it, till the Curé disa-
bused

10 Their ignorance, and bade the parish in a
band

Lay flat the obtrusive thing that cumbered
so the land!

And there, accordingly, in bush and briar
it — ‘bides

‘Its time to rise again!’ (so somebody
derides,

That’s pert from Paris) ‘since, yon spire,
you keep erect

‘Yonder, and pray beneath, is nothing, I
suspect,

‘But just the symbol’s self, expressed in
slate for rock,

‘Art’s smooth for Nature’s rough, new
chip from the old block!’

There, sir, my say is said! Thanks, and
Saint Gille increase

The wealth bestowed so well!” — where-
with he pockets piece,

20 Doffs cap, and takes the road. I leave
in Learning’s clutch

More money for his book, but scarcely
gain as much.

CCXIV.

To this it was, this same primæval
monument,

That, in my dream, I saw building with
building blent

Fall: each on each they fast and founde-
ringly went

Confusion-ward; but thence again sub-
sided fast,

Became the mound you see. Magnifi-
cently massed

Indeed, those mammoth-stones, piled by
the Protoplast

Temple-wise in my dream! beyond com-
pare with fanes

Which, solid-looking late, had left no least
remains

30 I’ the bald and blank, now sole usurper of
the plains

Of heaven, diversified and beautiful before.
And yet simplicity appeared to speak no
more

Nor less to me than spoke the compound.

At the core,

One and no other word, as in the crust of
late,

Whispered, which, audible through the
transition-state,

Was no loud utterance in even the ultimate
Disposure. For as some imperial chord

subsists,

Steadily underlies the accidental mists
Of music springing thence, that run their

mazy race
Around, and sink, absorbed, back to the 40
triad base, —

So, out of that one word, each variant rose
and fell

And left the same “All’s change, but per-
manence as well.”

— Grave note whence — list aloft! —
harmonics sound, that mean:

“Truth inside, and outside, truth also;
and between

Each, falsehood that is change, as truth is
permanence.

The individual soul works through the
shows of sense,

(Which, ever proving false, still promise
to be true)

Up to an outer soul as individual too;
And, through the fleeting, lives to die into

the fixed,
And reach at length ‘God, man, or both 50
together mixed,’

Transparent through the flesh, by parts
which prove a whole,

By hints which make the soul discernible
by soul —

Let only soul look up, not down, not hate
but love,

As truth successively takes shape, one
grade above

Its last presentment, tempts as it were truth
indeed

Revealed this time; so tempts, till we
attain to read

The signs aright, and learn, by failure,
truth is forced

To manifest itself through falsehood;
whence divorced

By the excepted eye, at the rare season,
for

The happy moment, truth instructs us to 60
abhor

The false, and prize the true, obtainable
thereby.

Then do we understand the value of a lie;
Its purpose served, its truth once safe

deposited,

Each lie, superfluous now, leaves, in the
singer’s stead,

The indubitable song; the historic per-
sonage

Put by, leaves prominent the impulse of
his age;

Truth sets aside speech, act, time, place,
indeed, but brings
Nakedly forward now the principle of
things
Highest and least."

CCXV.

Wherewith change ends. What
change to dread
When, disengaged at last from every veil,
instead
Of type remains the truth? once — false-
hood: but anon
Theosuton e broteion eper kekramenon,
Something as true as soul is true, though
veils between
Prove false and fleet away. As I mean,
did he mean,
The poet whose bird-phrase sits, singing
in my ear
10 A mystery not unlike? What through the
dark and drear
Brought comfort to the Titan? Emerg-
ing from the lymph,
"God, man, or mixture" proved only to
be a nymph:
"From whom the clink on clink of metal"
(money, judged
Abundant in my purse) "struck"
(bumped at, till it budged)
"The modesty, her soul's habitual resident"
(Where late the sisterhood were lively in
their tent)
"As out of wingèd car" (that caravan on
wheels)
"Impulsively she rushed, no slippers to
her heels,"
And "Fear not, friends we flock!" soft
smiled the sea-Fifine —
20 Primitive of the veils (if he meant what I
mean)
The poet's Titan learned to lift, ere
"Three-formed Fate,
Moirai Trimorphoi" stood unmasked the
Ultimate.

CCXVI.

Enough o' the dream! You see how
poetry turns prose.
Announcing wonder-work, I dwindle at
the close
Down to mere commonplace old facts
which everybody knows.
So dreaming disappoints! The fresh and
strange at first,
Soon wears to trite and tame, nor warrants
the outburst
Of heart with which we hail those heights
at very brink
Of heaven, whereto one least of lifts would
lead, we think,
30 But wherefrom quick decline conducts our
step, we find,
To homely earth, old facts familiar left
behind.

Did not this monument, for instance, long
ago
Say all it had to say, show all it had to
show,
Nor promise to do duty more in dream?

CCXVII.

Awaking so,
What if we, homeward-bound, all peace
and some fatigue,
Trudge, soberly complete our tramp of
near a league,
Last little mile which makes the circuit
just, Elvire?
We end where we began: that consequence
is clear.
All peace and some fatigue, wherever we
were nursed
To life, we bosom us on death, find last is 40
first
And thenceforth final too.

CCXVIII.

"Why final? Why the more
Worth credence now than when such truth
proved false before?"
Because a novel point impresses now:
each lie
Redounded to the praise of man, was
victory
Man's nature had both right to get, and
might to gain,
And by no means implied submission to
the reign
Of other quite as real a nature, that saw fit
To have its way with man, not man his way
with it.
This time, acknowledgment and acqui-
escence quell
Their contrary in man; promotion proves 50
as well
Defeat: and Truth, unlike the False with
Truth's outside,
Neither plumes up his will nor puffs him
out with pride.
I fancy, there must lurk some cogency i'
the claim,
Man, such abatement made, submits to,
all the same.
Soul finds no triumph, here, to register
like Sense
With whom 'tis ask and have, — the want,
the evidence
That the thing wanted, soon or late, will
be supplied.
This indeed plumes up will; this, sure,
puffs out with pride,
When, reading records right, man's in-
stincts still attest
Promotion comes to Sense because Sense 60
likes it best;
For bodies sprouted legs, through a desire
to run:

While hands, when fain to filch, got fingers
 one by one,
 And nature that's ourself, accommoda-
 tive brings
 To bear that, tired of legs which walk, we
 now bud wings
 Since of a mind to fly. Such savour in the
 nose
 Of Sense, would stimulate Soul sweetly, I
 suppose,
 Souls with its proper itch of instinct,
 prompting clear
 To recognise soul's self Soul's only master
 here
 Alike from first to last. But, if time's
 pressure, light's
 Or rather, dark's approach, wrest thor-
 oughly the rights
 10 Of rule away, and bid the soul submissive
 bear
 Another soul than it play master every-
 where
 In great and small, — this time, I fancy,
 none disputes
 There's something in the fact that such
 conclusion suits
 Nowise the pride of man, nor yet chimes
 in with attributes
 Conspicuous in the lord of nature. He re-
 ceives
 And not demands — not first likes faith
 and then believes.

CXXIX.

And as with the last essence so with its
 first faint type.
 In constancy means raw, 'tis faith alone
 means ripe
 I' the soul which runs its round: no matter
 how it range
 20 From Helen to Ffine, Elvire bids back the
 change
 To permanence. Here, too, love ends
 where love began.
 Such ending looks like law, because the
 natural man
 Inclines the other way, feels lordlier free
 than bound.
 Poor pabulum for pride when the first love
 is found
 Last also! and, so far from realising gain,
 Each step aside just proves divergency in
 vain.
 The wanderer brings home no profit from
 his quest
 Beyond the sad surmise that keeping house
 were best
 Could life begin anew. His problem
 posed aright
 30 Was — "From the given point evolve the
 infinite!"
 Not — "Spend thyself in space, en-
 deavouring to joint

Together, and so make infinite, point and
 point:
 Fix into one Elvire a Fair-ful of Ffines!"
 Ffine, the foam-flake, she: Elvire, the
 sea's self, means
 Capacity at need to shower how many
 such!
 And yet we left her calm profundity, to
 clutch
 Foam-flutter, bell on bell, that, bursting
 at a touch,
 Blistered us for our pains. But wise, we
 want no more
 O' the fickle element. Enough of foam
 and roar!
 Land-locked, we live and die henceforth: 4
 for here's the villa-door.

CXXX.

How pallidly you pause o' the threshold!
 Hardly night,
 Which drapes you, ought to make real
 flesh and blood so white!
 Touch me, and so appear alive to all in-
 tents!
 Will the saint vanish from the sinner that
 repents?
 Suppose you are a ghost! A memory, a
 hope,
 A fear, a conscience! Quick! Give
 back the hand I grope
 I' the dusk for!

CXXXI.

That is well. Our double horoscope
 I cast, while you concur. Discard that
 simile
 O' the fickle element! Elvire is land not
 sea —
 The solid land, the safe. All these word- 50
 bubbles came
 O' the sea, and bite like salt. The un-
 lucky bath's to blame.
 This hand of yours on heart of mine, no
 more the bay
 I beat, nor bask beneath the blue! In
 Pornic, say,
 The Mayor shall catalogue me duly
 domiciled,
 Contributable, good-companion of the guild
 And mystery of marriage. I stickle for
 the town,
 And not this tower apart; because,
 though, half-way down,
 Its mullions wink o'erwebbed with
 bloomy greenness, yet
 Who mounts to staircase top may tempt
 the parapet,
 And sudden there's the sea! No mem- 64
 ories to arouse,
 No fancies to delude! Our honest civic
 house
 Of the earth be earthy too! — or graced
 perchance with shell

Made prize of long ago, picked haply where
 the swell
 Menaced a little once — or seaweed-
 branch that yet
 Dampens and softens, notes a freak of
 wind, a fret
 Of wave: though, why on earth should
 sea-change mend or mar
 The calm contemplative householders that
 we are?
 So shall the seasons fleet, while our two
 selves abide:
 E'en past astonishment how sunrise and
 springtide
 Could tempt one forth to swim; the more if
 time appoints
 That swimming grow a task for one's
 rheumatic joints.
 10 Such honest civic house, behold, I con-
 stitute
 Our villa! Be but flesh and blood, and
 smile to boot!
 Enter for good and all! then fate bolt fast
 the door,
 Shut you and me inside, never to wander
 more!

CXXXII.

Only, — you do not use to apprehend
 attack!
 No doubt, the way I march, one idle arm,
 thrown slack
 Behind me, leaves the open hand defence-
 less at the back,
 Should an impertinent on tiptoe steal, and
 stuff
 — Whatever can it be? A letter sure
 enough,
 Pushed betwixt palm and glove! That
 largess of a franc?
 20 Perhaps unconsciously, — to better help
 the blank
 O' the nest, her tambourine, and, laying
 egg, persuade
 A family to follow, the nest-egg that I laid
 May have contained, — but just to foil
 suspicious folk, —
 Between two silver whites a yellow double
 yolk!
 Oh, threaten no farewell! five minutes
 shall suffice
 To clear the matter up. I go, and in a trice
 Return; five minutes past, expect me!
 If in vain —
 Why, slip from flesh and blood, and play
 the ghost again!

EPILOGUE.

THE HOUSEHOLDER.

I.

Savage I was sitting in my house, late,
 lone:

Dreary, weary with the long day's work: 3
 Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a
 stone:
 Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like
 a Turk;
 When, in a moment, just a knock, call,
 cry,
 Half a pang and all a rapture, there
 again were we! —
 "What, and is it really you again?" quoth
 I:
 "I again, what else did you expect?"
 quoth She.

II.

"Never mind, hie away from this old
 house —
 Every crumbling brick embrowned with
 sin and shame!
 Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes
 arcuse!
 Let them — every devil of the night —
 lay claim,
 Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me!
 Good-bye!
 God be their guard from disturbance at
 their glee,
 Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a
 heap!" quoth I:
 "Nay, but there's a decency required!"
 quoth She.

III.

"Ah, but if you knew how time has
 dragged, days, nights!
 All the neighbour-talk with man and
 maid — such men!
 All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds,
 window-sights:
 All the worry of flapping door and echo-
 ing roof; and then,
 All the fancies . . . Who were they had
 leave, dared try
 Darker arts that almost struck despair
 in me?
 If you knew but how I dwelt down here!"
 quoth I:
 "And was I so better off up there?"
 quoth She.

IV.

"Help and get it over! *Re-united to his
 wife*
 (How draw up the paper lets the parish-
 people know?)
*Lies M., or N., departed from this life,
 Day the this or that, month and year the
 so and so.*
 What i' the way of final flourish? Prose,
 verse? Try!
*Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what
 is it to be?*
*Till God did please to grant him ease. Do
 end!"* quoth I:
 "I end with — Love is all and Death is
 nought!" quoth She.

RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY,

OR

TURF AND TOWERS.

1873.

[This poem is founded on a somewhat disagreeable story told at great length in the French newspapers at the time (1871). In the early proofs the real names of the young goldsmith and his leman appeared, but before publication imaginary names were substituted. "Turf" stands for the self-indulgent life, and "Towers" typify the life of struggle and self-mastery.]

TO

MISS THACKERAY.

RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP, COUNTRY, OR TURF AND TOWERS.

I.

AND so, here happily we meet, fair friend!
Again once more, as if the years rolled
back
And this our meeting-place were just that
Rome
Out in the champaign, say, o'er-rioted
By verdure, ravage, and gay winds that
war
Against strong sunshine settled to his sleep;
Or on the Paris Boulevard, might it prove,
You and I came together saunteringly,
Bound for some shop-front in the Place
Vendôme —
Gold-smithy and Golconda mine, that
makes
"The Firm-Miranda" blazed about the
world —
Or, what if it were London, where my
toe
Trespassed upon your flounce? "Small
blame," you smile,
Seeing the Staircase Party in the Square
Was Small and Early, and you broke no
rib.

Even as we met where we have met so oft,
Now meet we on this unpretending beach
Below the little village: little, ay!
But pleasant, may my gratitude subjoin?
Meek, hitherto un-Murrayed bathing-
place,
Best loved of sea-coast-nook-ful Nor-
mandy!
That, just behind you, is mine own hired
house:
With right of pathway through the field in
front,

No prejudice to all its growth unsheaved
Of emerald luzern bursting into blue.
Be sure I keep the path that hugs the wall,
Of mornings, as I pad from door to gate!
Yon yellow — what if not wild-mustard
flower? —

Of that, my naked sole makes lawful prize,
Bruising the acrid aromatics out, 30
Till, what they preface, good salt savours
sting

From, first, the sifted sands, then sands in
slab,
Smooth save for pipy wreath-work of the
worm:

(Granite and mussel-shell are ground
alike

To glittering paste, — the live worm
troubles yet.)

Then, dry and moist, the varech¹ limit-
line,

Burnt cinder-black, with brown un-
crumpled swathe

Of berried softness, sea-swoln thrice its
size;

And, lo, the wave protrudes a lip at last,
And flecks my foot with froth, nor tempts 40
in vain.

Such is Saint-Rambert, wilder very much
Than Joyeux, that famed Joyous-Gard of
yours,

Some five miles farther down; much
homelier too —

Right for me, — right for you the fine
and fair!

Only, I could endure a transfer —
wrought

By angels famed still, through our country-
side,

For weights they fetched and craved in
old time

¹ Kelp, seaweeds.

When nothing like the need was — transfer, just
 Of Joyeux church, exchanged for yonder prig,
 Our brand-new stone cream-coloured master-piecc.

Well — and you know, and not since this one year,

The quiet seaside country? So do I:
 Who like it, in a manner, just because
 Nothing is prominently likeable
 To vulgar eye without a soul behind,
 Which, breaking surface, brings before the ball

10 Of sight, a beauty buried everywhere.
 If we have souls, know how to see and use,
 One place performs, like any other place,
 The proper service every place on earth
 Was framed to furnish man with: serves alike

To give him note that, through the place he sees,

A place is signified he never saw,
 But, if he lack not soul, may learn to know.
 Earth's ugliest walled and ceiled imprisonment

May suffer, through its single rent in roof,
 20 Admittance of a cataract of light
 Beyond attainment through earth's palace-panes

Pinholed athwart their windowed flagree
 By twinklings sobered from the sun outside.

Doubtless the High Street of our village here

Imposes hardly as Rome's Corso could:
 And our projected race for sailing-boats
 Next Sunday, when we celebrate our Saint,
 Falls very short of that attractiveness,
 That artistry in festive spectacle,

30 Paris ensures you when she welcomes back

(When shall it be?) the Assembly from Versailles;

While the best fashion and intelligence
 Collected at the counter of our Mayor
 (Dry goods he deals in, grocery beside)
 What time the post-bag brings the news from Vire, —

I fear me much, it scarce would hold its own,

That circle, that assorted sense and wit,
 With Five o'clock Tea in a house we know.

Still, 'tis the check that gives the leap its lift.

40 The nullity of cultivated souls,
 Even advantaged by their news from Vire,
 Only conduces to enforce the truth
 That, thirty paces off, this natural blue
 Broods o'er a bag of secrets, all unbroaded,
 Beneath the bosom of the placid deep,

Since first the Post Director sealed them safe;

And formidable I perceive this fact —
 Little Saint-Rambert touches the great sea.
 From London, Paris, Rome, where men are men,

Not mice, and mice not Mayors presumably,

Thought scarce may leap so fast, alight so far.

But this is a pretence, you understand,
 Disparagement in play to parry thrust
 Of possible objector: nullity
 And ugliness, the taunt be his, not mine
 Nor yours, — I think we know the world too well!

Did you walk hither, jog it by the plain,
 Or jaunt it by the highway, braving bruise

From springless and uncushioned vehicle?

Much, was there not, in place and people both,

To lend an eye to? and what eye like yours —

The learned eye is still the loving one!
 Our land: its quietude, productiveness,
 Its length and breadth of grain-crop, meadow-ground,

Its orchards in the pasture, farms a-field
 And hamlets on the road-edge, nought you missed

Of one and all the sweet rusticities!
 From stalwart strider by the waggon-side,
 Brightening the acre with his purple blouse,

To those dark-featured comely women-folk,

Healthy and tall, at work, and work indeed,

On every cottage door-step, plying brisk
 Bobbins that bob you ladies one such lace!
 Oh, you observed! and how that nimble play

Of finger formed the sole exception, bobbed

The one disturbance to the peace of things,
 Where nobody esteems it worth his while,
 If time upon the clock-face goes asleep,
 To give the rusted hands a helpful push.

Nobody lifts an energetic thumb
 And index to remove some dead and gone
 Notice which, posted on the barn, repeats
 For truth what two years' passage made a lie.

Still is for sale, next June, that same château

With all its immobilities, — were sold
 Duly next June behind the last but last;
 And, woe's me, still placards the Emperor
 His confidence in war he means to wage,
 God aiding and the rural populace.
 No: rain and wind must rub the rags away
 And let the lazy land untroubled snore.

Ah, in good truth? and did the drowshead
So suit, so soothe the learned loving eye,
That you were minded to confer a crown,
(Does not the poppy boast such?) — call
the land

By one slow hither-thither stretching, fast
Subsiding-into-slumber sort of name,
Symbolic of the place and people too,
“*White Cotton Night-cap Country?*” Ex-
cellent!

For they do, all, dear women young and
old,

10 Upon the heads of them bear notably
This badge of soul and body in repose;
Nor its fine thimble fits the acorn-top,
Keeps woolly ward above that oval brown,
Its placid feature, more than muffler makes
A safeguard, circumvents, intelligence
In — what shall evermore be named and
famed,

If happy nomenclature aught avail,
“*White Cotton Night-cap Country.*”

Do I hear —

Oh, better, very best of all the news —

20 You mean to catch and cage the winged
word,

And make it breed and multiply at home
Till Norman idlesse stock our England
too?

Normandy shown mini²e yet magnified
In one of those small books, the truly great,
We never know enough, yet know so well?
How I foresee, the cursive diamond-dints, —
Composite pen that plays the pencil too, —
As, touch the page and up the glamour
goes,

And filmily o'er grain-crop, meadow-
ground,

30 O'er orchard in the pasture, farm a-field
And hamlet on the road-edge, floats and
forms

And falls, at lazy last of all, the Cap
That crowns the country! we, awake out-
side,

Farther than ever from the imminence
Of what cool comfort, what close coverture
Your magic, deftly weaving, shall surround
The unconscious captives with. Be theirs
to drowse

Trammeled and ours to watch the tram-
mel-trick!

40 Ours be it, as we can the book of books,
To wonder how is winking possible!

All hail, “*White Cotton Night-cap Coun-
try,*” then!

And yet, as on the beach you promise
book, —

On beach, mere razor-edge 'twixt earth
and sea,

I stand at such a distance from the world
That 'tis the whole world which obtains
regard.

Rather than any part, though part pre-
sumed

A perfect little province in itself,
When wayfare made acquaintance first
therewith.

So standing, therefore, on this edge of
things,

What if the backward glance I gave, return 50
Loaded with other spoils of vagrancy

Than I dispatched it for, till I propose
The question — puzzled by the sudden
store

Official fancy plumps beneath my nose —
“Which sort of Night-cap have you glori-
fied?”

You would be gracious to my ignorance:
“What other Night-cap than the normal
one? —

Old honest guardian of man's head and
hair

In its elastic yet continuous, soft,
No less persisting, circumambient gripe, — 60
Night's notice, life is respited from day!

Its form and fashion vary, suiting so
Each seasonable want of youth and age.

In infancy, the rosy naked ball
Of brain, and that faint golden fluff it
bears,

Are smothered from disaster, — nurses
know

By what foam-fabric; but when youth suc-
ceeds,

The sterling value of the article
Discards adornment, cap is cap henceforth

Unfeathered by the futile row on row. 70
Manhood strains hard a sturdy stocking-
stuff

O'er well-deserving head and ears: the
cone

Is tassel-tipt, commendably takes pride,
Announcing workday done and wages
pouched,

And liberty obtained to sleep, nay, snore
Unwise, he peradventure shall essay

The sweets of independency for once —
Waive its advantage on his wedding-night:

Fool, only to resume it, night the next,
And never part companionship again. 8c

Since, with advancing years, night's solace
soon

Intrudes upon the daybreak dubious life
Persuades it to appear the thing it is,

Half-sleep; and so, encroaching more and
more,

It lingers long past the abstemious meal
Of morning, and, as prompt to serve, pre-
cedes

The supper-summons, gruel grown a feast.
Finally, when the last sleep finds the eye

So tired it cannot even shut itself,
Does not a kind domestic hand unite 90
Friend to friend, lid from lid to part no
more,

Consigned alike to that receptacle
So bleak without, so warm and white
within?

"Night-caps, night's comfort of the human
race:

Their usage may be growing obsolete,
Still, in the main, the institution stays.
And though yourself may possibly have
lived,

And probably will die, undignified —
The Never-night-capped — more experi-
enced folk

Laugh you back answer — What should
Night-cap be

Save Night-cap pure and simple? Sorts
of such?

Take cotton for the medium, cast an eye
This side to comfort, lambswool or the like,
That side to frilly cambric costliness,
And all between proves Night-cap proper."

Add
"Fiddle!" and I confess the argument.

Only, your ignoramus here again
Proceeds as tardily to recognize
Distinctions: ask him what a fiddle means,
And "Just a fiddle" seems the apt reply.

Yet, is not there, while we two pace the
beach,

This blessed moment, at your Kensington,
A special Fiddle-Show and rare array
Of all the sorts were ever set to cheek,
'Stablished on clavicle, sawn bow-hand-
wise,

Or touched lute-fashion and forefinger-
plucked?

I doubt not there be duly catalogued
Achievements all and some of Italy,
Guarnerius, Straduarious,¹ — old and new,
Augustly rude, refined to finicking,
This mammoth with his belly full of blare,
That mouse of music — inch-long sil-
very wheeze.

And here a specimen has effloresced
Into a scroll-head, there subsides supreme,
And with the tail-piece satisfies mankind.
Why should I speak of woods, grains, stains
and streaks,

The topaz varnish or the ruby gum?
We preferably pause where tickets teach
"Over this sample would Corelli² croon,
Grieving, by minors, like the cushat-dove,
Most dulcet Giga,³ dreamiest Saraband."⁴

"From this did Paganini comb the fierce
Electric sparks, or to tenuity
Pull forth the inmost wailing of the wire —
No cat-gut could swoon out so much of
soul!"

Three hundred violin-varieties

¹ Famous fiddle-makers.

² A famous fiddler and composer (1653-1713).

³ Jig.

⁴ A Spanish dance.

Exposed to public view! And dare I
doubt

Some future enterprise shall give the world
Quite as remarkable a Night-cap-show?

Methinks, we, arm-in-arm, that festal day,
Pace the long range of relics shined aright, so
Framed, glazed, each cushioned curiosity,
And so begin to smile and to inspect:

"Pope's sickly head-sustainment, damped
with dew

Wrung from the all-unfair fight: such a
frame —

Though doctor and the devil helped their
best —

Fought such a world that, waiving doctor's
help,

Had the mean devil at its service too!

Voltaire's imperial velvet! Hogarth eyed
The thumb-nail record of some alley-phys,
Then chucklingly clapped yonder cosiness (oc
On pate, and painted with true flesh and
blood!

Poor hectic Cowper's soothing sarsnet-
stripe!"

And so we profit by the catalogue,
Somehow our smile subsiding more and
more,

Till we decline into . . . but no! shut
eyes

And hurry past the shame uncoffined here,
The hangman's toilet! If we needs must
trench,

For science' sake which craves complete-
ness still,

On the sad confine, not the district's self,
The object that shall close review may be . . .

Well, it is French, and here are we in
France:

It is historic, and we live to learn,
And try to learn by reading story-books.

It is an incident of 'Ninety-two,
And, twelve months since, the Commune
had the sway.

Therefore resolve that, after all the Whites
Presented you, a solitary Red
Shall pain us both, a minute and no more!
Do not you see poor Louis pushed to front
Of palace-window, in persuasion's name, so

A spectacle above the howling mob
Who tasted, as it were, with tiger-smack,
The outstart, the first spirt of blood on
brow,

The Phrygian symbol, the new crown of
thorns,

The Cap of Freedom? See the feeble
mirth

At odds with that half-purpose to be strong
And merely patient under misery!

And note the ejaculation, ground so hard
Between his teeth, that only God could
hear,

As the lean pale proud insignificance

With the sharp-featured liver-worried stare
Out of the two grey points that did him
stead

And passed their eagle-owner to the front
Better than his mob-elbowed undersize, —
The Corsican lieutenant commented

"Had I but one good regiment of my own,
How soon should volleys to the due amount
Lay stiff upon the street-flags this *canaille*!
As for the droll there, he that plays the
king

to And screws out smile with a Red night-cap
on,

He's done for! Somebody must take his
place."

White Cotton Night-cap Country: excel-
lent!

Why not Red Cotton Night-cap Country
too?

"Why not say swans are black and black-
birds white,

Because the instances exist?" you ask.

"Enough, that white, not red, predomi-
nates,

Is normal, in cleric phrase

Quod semel, semper, et ubique." Here,

Applying such a name to such a land,

to Especially you find inopportune,

Impertinent, my scruple whether white

Or red describes the local colour best.

"Let be" (you say), "the universe at large

Supplied us with exceptions to the rule,

So manifold, they bore no passing-by, —
Little Saint-Rambert has conserved at
least

The pure tradition: white from head to
heel,

Where is a hint of the ungracious hue?

See, we have traversed with hop, step and
jump,

to From heel to head, the main-street in a
trice,

Measured the garment (help my meta-
phor!)

Not merely criticised the cap, forsooth;

And were you pricked by that collecting-
itch,

That prurience for writing o'er your reds

'Rare, rarer, rarest, not rare but unique,'—

The shelf, Saint-Rambert, of your cabinet

Unlabelled, — virginal, no Rahab-thread!

For blushing token of the spy's success, —

Would taunt with vacancy, I undertake!

to What, yonder is your best apology,

Pretext at most approach to naughtiness,

Impingement of the ruddy on the blank?

This is the criminal Saint-Rambertese

Who smuggled in tobacco, half-a-pound!

The Octroi² found it out and fined the
wretch,

¹ Joshua ii. 18.

² Taxes levied at the gates of cities.

This other is the culprit who despatched
A hare, he thought a hedgehog (clods ob-
struct),

Unfurnished with Permission for the
Chase!

As to the womankind — renounce from
those

The hope of getting a companion-tinge, 50

First faint touch promising romantic
fault!"

Enough: there stands Red Cotton Night-
cap shelf

A cavern's ostentatious vacancy —

My contribution to the show; while
yours —

Whites heap your row of pegs from every
hedge

Outside, and house inside Saint-Rambert
here —

We soon have come to end of. See, the
church

With its white steeple gives your challenge
point,

Perks as it were the night-cap of the town,

Starchedly warrants all beneath is matched 60
By all above, one snowy innocence!

You put me on my mettle. British maid

And British man, suppose we have it out

Here in the fields, decide the question so?

Then, British fashion, shake hands hard
again,

Go home together, friends the more con-
firmed

That one of us — assuredly myself —

Looks puffy about eye, and pink at nose?

Which "pink" reminds me that the ardu-
ousness

We both acknowledge in the enterprise, 70

Claims, counts upon a large and liberal

Acceptance of as good as victory

In whatsoever just escapes defeat.

You must be generous, strain point, and
call

Victory, any the least flush of pink
Made prize of, labelled scarlet for the
nonce —

Faintest pretension to be wrong and red

And picturesque, that varies by a splotch

The righteous flat of insipidity.

Quick to the quest, then, — forward, the 80
firm foot!

Onward, the quarry-overtaking eye!

For, what is this, by way of march-tune,
makes

The musicaliest buzzing at my ear

By reassurance of that promise old

Though sins are scarlet they shall be as wool?

Whence — what fantastic hope do I de-
duce?

I am no Liebig: when the dyer dyes

A texture, can the red dye prime the white?
 And if we washed well, wrung the texture
 hard,
 Would we arrive, here, there and every-
 where,
 At a fierce ground beneath the surface
 meek?

I take the first chance, rub to threads what
 rag
 Shall flutter snowily in sight. For see!
 Already these few yards upon the rise,
 Our back to brave Saint-Rambert, how
 we reach

The open, at a dozen steps or strides!
 10 Turn round and look about, a breathing-
 while!

There lie, outspread at equidistance,
 thorpes

And villages and towns along the coast,
 Distinguishable, each and all alike,
 By white persistent Night-cap, spire on
 spire.

Take the left: yonder town is — what
 say you

If I say "Londres"? Ay, the mother-
 mouse

(Reversing fable, as truth can and will)
 Which gave our mountain of a London
 birth!

This is the Conqueror's country, bear in
 mind,

20 And Londres-district blooms with London-
 pride.

Turn round: La Roche, to right, where
 oysters thrive:

Monlieu — the lighthouse is a telegraph;
 This, full in front, Saint-Rambert; then
 succeeds

Villeneuve, and Pons the Young with Pons
 the Old,

And — ere faith points to Joyeux, out of
 sight,

A little nearer — oh, La Ravissante!

There now is something like a Night-cap
 spire,

Donned by no ordinary Notre-Dame!
 For, one of the three safety-guards of
 France,

30 You front now, lady! Nothing intercepts
 The privilege, by crow-flight, two miles far.
 She and her sisters Lourdes and La Salette
 Are at this moment hailed the cynosure
 Of poor dear France, such waves have
 buffeted

Since she eschewed infallibility
 And chose to steer by the vague compass-
 box.

This same midsummer month, a week ago,
 Was not the memorable day observed
 For reinstatement of the misused Three

40 In old supremacy for evermore?
 Did not the faithful flock in pilgrimage

By railway, diligence and steamer — nay
 On foot with staff and scrip, to see the
 sights

Assured them? And I say best sight was
 here:

And nothing justified the rival Two
 In their pretension to equality;
 Our folk laid out their ticket-money best,
 And wiseliest, if they walked, wore shoe
 away;

Not who went farther only to fare worse.
 For, what was seen at Lourdes and La
 Salette

Except a couple of the common cures
 Such as all three can boast of, any day?

While here it was, here and by no means
 there,

That the Pope's self sent two great real
 gold crowns

As thick with jewelry as thick could stick,
 His present to the Virgin and her Babe —
 Provided for — who knows not? — by
 that fund,

Count Alessandro Sforza's legacy,
 Which goes to crown some Virgin every
 year.

But this year, poor Pope was in prison-
 house,

And money had to go for something else;
 And therefore, though their present seemed
 the Pope's,

The faithful of our province raised the sum
 Preached and prayed out of — nowise
 purse alone.

Gentle and simple paid in kind, not cash,
 The most part: the great lady gave her
 brooch,

The peasant-girl her hair-pin; 'twas the
 rough

Bluff farmer mainly who, — admonished
 well

By wife to care lest his new colewort-crop
 Stray sorrowfully sparse like last year's
 seed, —

Lugged from reluctant pouch the fifty-
 franc,

And had the Curé's hope that rain would
 cease.

And so the sum in evidence at length,
 Next step was to obtain the donative

By the spontaneous bounty of the Pope —
 No easy matter, since his Holiness

Had turned a deaf ear, long and long ago,
 To much entreaty on our Bishop's part,

Commendably we boast. "But no,"
 quoth he,

"Image and image needs must take their
 turn:

Here stand a dozen as importunate."
 Well, we were patient; but the cup ran o'er

When — who was it pressed in and took
 the prize

But our own offset, set far off indeed
 To grow by help of our especial name,

She of the Ravissante — in Martinique!
 "What?" cried our patience at the boiling-
 point,

"The daughter crowned, the mother's
 head goes bare?

Bishop of Raimbaux!" — that's our dio-
 cese —

"Thou hast a summons to repair to Rome,
 Be efficacious at the Council there:
 Now is the time or never! Right our
 wrang!

Hie thee away, thou valued Morillon,
 And have the promise, thou who hast the
 vote!"

So said, so done, so followed in due course
 (To cut the story short) this festival,
 This famous Twenty-second, seven days
 since.

Oh, but you heard at Joyeux! Pilgrim-
 age,

Concourse, procession with, to head the
 host,

Cardinal Mirecourt, quenching lesser
 lights:

The leafy street-length through, decked
 end to end

With August-stripping, and adorned with
 flags

That would have waved right well but that
 it rained

Just this picked day, by some perversity.
 And so were placed, on Mother and on

Babe,
 The pair of crowns: the Mother's, you
 must see!

Miranda, the great Paris goldsmith, made
 The marvel, — he's a neighbour: that's
 his park

Before you, tree-topped wall we walk
 toward

His shop it was turned out the masterpiece,
 Probably at his own expenditure;

Anyhow, his was the munificence
 Contributed the central and supreme

Splendour that crowns the crown itself,
 The Stone.

Not even Paris, ransacked, could supply
 That gem: he had to forage in New-York,
 This jeweller, and country-gentleman,
 And most undoubted devotee beside!

Worthily wived, too: since his wife it was
 Bestowed "with friendly hand" — be-
 fitting phrase!

The lace which trims the coronation-
 robe —

Stiff wear — a mint of wealth on the bro-
 cade.

Do go and see what I saw yesterday!
 And, for that matter, see in fancy still,

Since . . .

There now! Even for unthankful me,
 Who stuck to my devotions at high-tide

That festal morning, never had a mind
 To trudge the little league and join the
 crowd —

Even for me is miracle vouchsafed!
 How pointless proves the sneer at miracles!

As if, contrariwise to all we want
 And reasonably look to find, they graced

Merely those graced-before, grace helps
 no whit,

Unless, made whole, they need physician
 still.

I — sceptical in every inch of me, — 59

Did I deserve that, from the liquid name
 "Miranda," — faceted as lovelily

As his own gift, the gem, — a shaft should
 shine,

Bear me along, another Abaris,¹
 Nor let me light till, lo, the Red is reached,
 And yonder lies in luminosity!

Look, lady! where I bade you glance but
 now!

Next habitation, though two miles away, —
 No tenement for man or beast between, — 60

That, park and domicile, is country-seat
 Of this same good Miranda! I accept

The augury. Or there, or nowhere else,
 Will I establish that a Night-cap gleams

Of visionary Red, not White for once!
 "Heaven" saith the sage "is with us, here

inside
 Each man:" "Hell also," simpleness sub-
 joins,

By White and Red describing human flesh.

And yet as we continue, quicken pace,
 Approach the object which determines me

Victorious or defeated, more forlorn 70
 My chance seems, — that is certainty at
 least.

Halt midway, reconnoitre! Either side
 The path we traverse (turn and see)

stretch fields

Without a hedge: one level, scallop-striped²
 With bands of beet and turnip and luzern,

Limited only by each colour's end,
 Shelves down, — we stand upon an emi-
 nence, —

To where the earth-shell scallops out the
 sea,

A sweep of semicircle; and at edge —

Just as the milk-white incrustations stud 80
 At intervals some shell-extremity,

So do the little growths attract us here,
 Towns with each name I told you: say,

they touch

The sea, and the sea them, and all is said,
 So sleeps and sets to slumber that broad
 blue!

The people are as peaceful as the place.
 This, that I call "the path" is road, high-
 way;

¹ A priest of Apollo who cured diseases.

² Striped like a scallop-shell.

But has there passed us by a market-cart,
Man, woman, child, or dog to wag a tail?
True, I saw weeders stooping in a field;
But — formidably white the Cap's extent!

Round again! Come, appearance promises!

The boundary, the park-wall, ancient brick,

Upholds a second wall of tree-heads high
Which overlean its top, a solid green.

That surely ought to shut in mysteries!

10 A jeweller — no unsuggestive craft!

Trade that admits of much romance, indeed.

For, whom but goldsmiths used old monarchs pledge

Regalia to, or seek a ransom from,

Or pray to furnish dowry, at a pinch,

According to authentic story-books?

Why, such have revolutionised this land
With diamond-necklace-dealing! not to speak

Of families turned upside-down, because
The gay wives went and pawned clandestinely

20 Jewels, and figured, till found out, with paste,

Or else redeemed them — how, is horrible!
Then there are those enormous criminals

That love their ware and cannot lose their love,

And murder you to get your purchase back.
Others go courting after such a stone,

Make it their mistress, marry for their wife,
And find out, some day, it was false the while,

As ever wife or mistress, man too fond
Has named his Pilgrim, Hermit, Ace of Hearts.

30 Beside — what style of edifice begins
To grow in sight at last and top the scene?
That grey roof, with the range of *lucarnes*,¹
four

I count, and that erection in the midst —
Clock-house, or chapel-spire, or what,
above?

Conventual, that, beyond manorial, sure!
And reason good; for Clairvaux, such its name,

Was built of old to be a Priory,
Dependence on that Abbey-for-the-Males
Our Conqueror founded in world-famous Caen,

40 And where his body sought the sepulture
It was not to retain: you know the tale.
Such Priory was Clairvaux, prosperous
Hundreds of years; but nothing lasts
below,

And when the Red Cap pushed the Crown
aside,

The Priory became, like all its peers,

¹ Roof windows.

A National Domain: which, bought and sold

And resold, needs must change, with ownership,

Both outside show and inside use; at length
The messuage, three-and-twenty years ago,
Became the purchase of rewarded worth 5
Impersonate in Father — I must stoop
To French phrase for precision's sake, I fear —

Father Miranda, goldsmith of renown:

By birth a Madrilene,² by domicile

And sojourning accepted French at last.

His energy it was which, trade transferred
To Paris, throve as with a golden thumb,

Established in the Place Vendôme. He bought

Not building only, but belongings far

And wide, at Gonther there, Monlieu, 5
Villeneuve,

A plentiful estate: which, twelve years since,

Passed, at the good man's natural demise,
To Son and Heir Miranda — Clairvaux

here,

The Paris shop, the mansion — not to say
Palatial residence on Quai Rousseau,

With money, moveables, a mine of wealth —
And young Léonce Miranda got it all.

Ah, but — whose might the transformation be?

Were you prepared for this, now? As we talked,

We walked, we entered the half-privacy, 7
The partly guarded precinct: passed be-

side

The little paled-off islet, trees and turf,
Then found us in the main ash-avenue

Under the blessing of its branchage-roof
Till, on emergence, what affronts our gaze?

Priory — Conqueror — Abbey-for-the-
Males —

Hey, presto, pass, who conjured all away?
Look through the railwork of the gate:

a park

—Yes, but *à l'Anglaise*, as they compliment!

Grass like green velvet, gravel-walks like gold,

Bosses of shrubs, embosomings of flowers,
Lead you — through sprinkled trees of

tiny breed

Disporting, within reach of coverture
By some habitual acquiescent oak

Or elm, that thinks, and lets the youngsters laugh —

Lead, lift at last your soul that walks the air,

Up to the house-front, or its back perhaps —
Whether façade or no, one coquetry

Of coloured brick and carved stone!
Stucco? Well,

The daintiness is cheery, that I know,

² Of Madrid.

And all the sportive floral framework fits
The lightsome purpose of the architect.
Those *lucarnes* which I called conventual,
late,

Those are the outlets in the *mansarde*-
roof;¹

And, underneath, what long light elegance
Of windows here suggests how brave inside
Lurk eyeballed gems they play the eyelids
to!

Festive arrangements look through such,
be sure!

And now the tower atop, I took for clock's
Or bell's abode, turns out a quaint device,
Pillared and temple-treated Belvedere —
Pavilion safe within its railed-about
Sublimity of area — whence what stretch
Of sea and land, throughout the seasons'
change,

Must greet the solitary! Or suppose
— If what the husband likes, the wife likes
too —

The happy pair of students cloistered high,
Alone in April kiss when Spring arrives!
Or no, he mounts there by himself to meet
20 Winds, welcome wafts of sea-smell, first
white bird

That flaps thus far to taste the land again,
And all the promise of the youthful year;
Then he descends, unbosoms straight his
store

Of blessings in the bud, and both embrace,
Husband and wife, since earth is Paradise,
And man at peace with God. You see it
all?

Let us complete our survey, go right round
The place: for here, it may be, we surprise
The Priory, — these solid walls, big barns,
30 Grey orchard-grounds, huge four-square
stores for stock,

Betoken where the Church was busy once.
Soon must we come upon the Chapel's self.
No doubt next turn will treat us to . . .

Aha,
Again our expectation proves at fault!
Still the bright graceful modern — not to
say

Modish adornment, meets us: *Parc Ang-*
lais,

Tree-sprinkle, shrub-embossment as before.
See, the sun splits on yonder bauble world
Of silvered glass concentrating, every side,

40 All the adjacent wonder, made minute
And touched grotesque by ball-convexity!

Just so, a sense that something is amiss,
Something is out of sorts in the display,
Affects us, past denial, everywhere.

The right erection for the Fields, the Wood
(Fields — but *Elysées*, wood — but *de*
Boulogne)

¹ High French roof with rooms in it, first
used in the Louvre. Mansard was an archi-
tect, died 1666.

Is peradventure wrong for wood and fields
When Vire, not Paris, plays the Capital.

So may a good man have deficient taste;
Since Son and Heir Miranda, he it was 50
Who, six years now elapsed, achieved the
work

And truly made a wilderness to smile.

Here did their domesticity reside,

A happy husband and as happy wife,

Till . . . how can I in conscience longer
keep

My little secret that the man is dead

I, for artistic purpose, talk about

As if he lived still? No, these two years
now,

Has he been dead. You ought to sym-
pathise,

Not mock the sturdy effort to redeem 60

My pledge, and wring you out some tragedy

From even such a perfect commonplace!

Suppose I boast the death of such desert

My tragic bit of Red? Who contravenes

Assertion that a tragedy exists

In any stoppage of benevolence,

Utility, devotion above all?

Benevolent? There never was his like:

For poverty, he had an open hand

. . . Or stop — I use the wrong expression 70
here —

An open purse, then, ever at appeal;

So that the unreflecting rather taxed

Profusion than penuriousness in alms.

One, in his day and generation, deemed

Of use to the community? I trust

Clairvaux thus renovated, regalsed,

Paris expounded thus to Normandy,

Answers that question. Was the man
devout?

After a life — one mere munificence

To Church and all things churchly, men or 80
mice, —

Dying, his last bequeathment gave land,
goods,

Cash, every stick and stiver, to the Church,

And notably to that church yonder, that

Beloved of his soul La Ravissante —

Wherefrom, the latest of his gifts, the Stone

Gratefully bore me as on arrow-flash

To Clairvaux, as I told you.

“Ay, to find

Your Red desiderated article,

Where every scratch and scrape provokes
my White

To all the more superb a prominence! 90

Why, 'tis the story served up fresh again —

How it befell the restive prophet old

Who came and tried to curse, but blessed
the land

Come, your last chance! he disinherited

Children: he made his widow mourn too
much

By this endowment of the other Bride —

Nor understood that gold and jewelry
Adorn her in a figure, not a fact.
You make that White, I want, so very
white,
'Tis I say now — some trace of Red should
be
Somewhere in this Miranda-sanctitude!"

Not here, at all events, sweet mocking
friend!

For he was childless; and what heirs he
had

Were an uncertain sort of Cousinry
Scarce claiming kindred so as to withhold
10 The donor's purpose though fantastical:
Heirs, for that matter, wanting no increase
Of wealth, since rich already as himself;
Heirs that had taken trouble off his hands,
Bought that productive goldsmith-business
he,

With abnegation wise as rare, renounced
Precisely at a time of life when youth,
Nigh on departure, bids mid-age discard
Life's other loves and likings in a pack,
To keep, in lucre, comfort worth them all.
20 This Cousinry are they who boast the shop
Of "Firm-Miranda, London and New-
York."

Cousins are an unconscionable kind;
But these — pretension surely on their part
To share inheritance were too absurd!

"Remains then, he dealt wrongly by his
wife,
Despoiled her somehow by such testament?
Farther than ever from the mark, fair
friend!

The man's love for his wife exceeded
bounds

Rather than failed the limit. 'Twas to
live

30 Hers and hers only, to abolish earth
Outside — since Paris holds the pick of
earth —

He turned his back, shut eyes, stopped ears
to all

Delicious Paris tempts her children with,
And fled away to this far solitude —
She peopling solitude sufficiently!

She, partner in each heavenward flight
sublime,

Was, with each condescension to the
ground,

Duly associate also: hand in hand,
. . . Or side by side, I say by preference —

On every good work sidelingly they went.
40 Hers was the instigation — none but she
Willed that, if death should summon first
her lord,

Though she, sad relict, must drag residue
Of days encumbered by this load of
wealth —

(Submitted to with something of a grace
So long as her surviving vigilance

Might worthily administer, convert
Wealth to God's glory and the good of
man,

Give, as in life, so now in death, effect
(To cherished purpose) — yet she begged
and prayed

That, when no longer she could supervise
The House, it should become a Hospital:
For the support whereof, lands, goods and
cash

Alike will go, in happy guardianship
To yonder church, la Ravissante: who
debt

To God and man undoubtedly will pay.

"Not of the world, your heroine!"

Do you know

I saw her yesterday — set eyes upon
The veritable personage, no dream?
I in the morning strolled this way, as oft,
And stood at entry of the avenue.

When, out from that first garden-gate, we
gazed

Upon and through, a small procession
swept —

Madame Miranda with attendants five.
First, of herself: she wore a soft and white
Engaging dress, with velvet stripes and
squares

Severely black, yet scarce discouraging:
Fresh Paris-manufacture! (Vire's would
do?)

I doubt it, but confess my ignorance.)
Her figure? somewhat small and darling-
like.

Her face? well, singularly colourless, 7
For first thing: which scarce suits a blonde,
you know.

Pretty you would not call her: though
perhaps

Attaining to the ends of prettiness
And somewhat more, suppose enough of
soul.

Then she is forty full: you cannot judge
What beauty was her portion at eighteen,
The age she married at. So, colourless
I stick to, and if featureless I add,
Your notion grows completer: for, although
I noticed that her nose was aquiline, 8
The whole effect amounts with me to —
blank!

I never saw what I could less describe.
The eyes, for instance, unforgettable
Which ought to be, are out of mind as
sight.

Yet is there not conceivably a face,
A set of wax-like features, blank at first,
Which, as you bendingly grow warm above,
Begins to take impressment from your
breath?

Which, as your will itself were plastic here
Nor needed exercise of handicraft,

From formless moulds itself to correspond
 With all you think and feel and are — in
 fine
 Grows a new revelation of yourself,
 Who know now for the first time what you
 want?
 Here has been something that could wait
 awhile,
 Learn your requirement, nor take shape
 before,
 But, by adopting it, make palpable
 Your right to an importance of your own,
 Companions somehow were so slow to
 see!
 10 — Far delicater solace to conceit
 Than should some absolute and final face,
 Fit representative of soul inside,
 Summon you to surrender — in no way
 Your breath's impressment, nor, in stran-
 ger's guise,
 Yourself — or why of force to challenge
 you?
 Why should your soul's reflection rule your
 soul?
 ("You" means not you, nor me, nor any-
 one
 Framed, for a reason I shall keep sup-
 pressed,
 To rather want a master than a slave:
 20 The slavish still aspires to dominate!)
 So, all I say is, that the face, to me
 One blur of blank, might flash significance
 To who had seen his soul reflected there
 By that symmetric silvery phantom-like
 Figure, with other five processional.
 The first, a black-dressed matron — maybe,
 maid —
 Mature, and dragonish of aspect, —
 marched;
 Then four came tripping in a joyous flock,
 Two giant goats and two prodigious sheep
 30 Pure as the arctic fox that suits the snow
 Tripped, trotted, turned the march to
 merriment,
 But ambled at their mistress' heel — for
 why?
 A rod of guidance marked the *Châtelaine*,
 And ever and anon would sceptre wave,
 And silky subject leave meandering.
 Nay, one great naked sheep-face stopped
 to ask
 Who was the stranger, snuffed inquisitive
 My hand that made acquaintance with
 its nose,
 Examined why the hand — of man at least —
 40 Patted so lightly, warmly, so like life!
 Are they such silly natures after all?
 And thus accompanied, the paled-off space,
 Isleted shrubs and verdure, gained the
 group;
 Till, as I gave a furtive glance, and saw
 Her back-hair was a block of solid gold,
 The gate shut out my harmless question —
 Hair

So young and yellow, crowning sanctity,
 And claiming solitude . . . can hair be
 false?

"Shut in the hair and with it your last hope
 Yellow might on inspection pass for 50
 Red! —

Red, Red, where is the tinge of promised
 Red

In this old tale of town and country life,
 This rise and progress of a family?
 First comes the bustling man of enterprise,
 The fortune-founding father, rightly rough,
 As who must grub and grab, play pioneer.
 Then, with a light and airy step, succeeds
 The son, surveys the fabric of his sire
 And enters home, unsmirched from top to
 toe.

Polish and education qualify 60
 Their fortunate possessor to confine
 His occupancy to the first-floor suite
 Rather than keep exploring needlessly
 Where dwelt his sire content with cellarge:
 Industry bustles underneath, no doubt,
 And supervisors should not sit too close.
 Next, rooms built, there's the furniture to
 buy,

And what adornment like a worthy wife?
 In comes she like some foreign cabinet,
 Purchased indeed, but purifying quick 70
 What space receives it from all traffic-
 taint.

She tells of other habits, palace-life;
 Royalty may have pried into those depths
 Of sandal-wooded drawer, and set a-creak
 That pigmy portal pranked with lazuli.
 More fit by far the ignoble we replace
 By objects suited to such visitant
 Than that we desecrate her dignity
 By neighbourhood of vulgar table, chair,
 Which haply helped old age to smoke and 80
 doze.

The end is, an exchange of city-stir
 And too intrusive burgess-fellowship,
 For rural isolated elegance,
 Careless simplicity, how preferable!
 There one may fairly throw behind one's
 back

The used-up worn-out Past, we want
 away,

And make a fresh beginning of stale life.
 'In just the place' — does anyone object? —
 'Where aboriginal gentility

Will scout the upstart, twit him with each 90
 trick

Of townish trade-mark that stamps word
 and deed,

And most of all resent that here town-dross
 He daubs with money-colour to deceive!
 Rashly objected! Is there not the Church
 To intercede and bring benefic truce
 At outset? She it is shall equalise
 The labourers i' the vineyard, last as first
 Pay court to her, she stops impertinence.

'Duke, once your sires crusaded it, we know:
 Our friend the newcomer observes, no less,
 Your chapel, rich with their emblazonry,
 Wants roofing — might he but supply the means!
 Marquise, you gave the honour of your name,
 Titular patronage, abundant will
 To what should be an Orphan Institute:
 Gave everything but funds, in brief; and these,
 Our friend, the lady newly resident,
 10 Proposes to contribute, by your leave!
 Brothers and sisters lie they in thy lap,
 Thou none - excluding, all - collecting Church!
 Sure, one has half a foot i' the hierarchy
 Of birth, when 'Nay, my dear,' laughs out the Duke,
 'I'm the crown's cushion-carrier, but the crown —
 Who gave its central glory, I or you?'
 When Marquise jokes 'My quest, forsooth? Each doit
 I scrape together goes for Peter-pence
 To purvey bread and water in his bonds
 20 For Peter's self imprisoned — Lord, how long?
 Yours, yours alone the bounty, dear my dame,
 You plumped the purse which, poured into the plate,
 Made the Archbishop open brows so broad!
 And if you really mean to give that length
 Of lovely lace to edge the robe!' . . . Ah, friends,
 Gem better serves so than by calling crowd
 Round shop-front to admire the million's-worth!
 Lace gets more homage than from *lorgnette*-stare,
 And comment coarse to match, (should one display
 30 One's robe a trifle o'er the *baignoire*-edge,)¹
 'Well may she line her slippers with the like,
 If minded so! their shop it was produced
 That wonderful *parure*,² the other day,
 Whereof the Baron said it beggared him.'
 And so the paired Mirandas built their house,
 Enjoyed their fortune, sighed for family,
 Found friends would serve their purpose quite as well,
 And come, at need, from Paris — anyhow,
 With evident alacrity, from Vire —
 40 Endeavour at the chase, at least succeed

In smoking, eating, drinking, laughing, and
 Preferring country, oh so much, to town!
 Thus lived the husband; though his wife would sigh
 In confidence, when Courtesses were kind,
 'Cut off from Paris and society!'
 White, White, I once more round you in the ears!
 Though you have marked it, in a corner, yours
 Henceforth, — Red-lettered 'Failure' very plain,
 I shall acknowledge, on the snowy hem
 Of ordinary Night-cap! Come, enough! 5
 We have gone round its cotton vastitude,
 Or half-round, for the end's consistent still,
 A *cul-de-sac* with stoppage at the sea.
 Here we return upon our steps. One look
 May bid good morning — properly good night —
 To civic bliss, Miranda and his mate!
 Are we to rise and go?"

No, sit and stay!
 Now comes my moment, with the thrilling throw
 Of curtain from each side a shrouded case.
 Don't the rings shriek an ominous "Ha! 6
 ha!
 So you take Human Nature upon trust?"
 List but with like trust to an incident
 Which speedily shall make quite Red enough
 Burn out of yonder spotless napery!
 Sit on the little mound here, whence you seize
 The whole of the gay front sun-satisfied,
 One laugh of colour and embellishment!
 Because it was there, — past those laurustines,³
 On that smooth gravel-sweep 'twixt
 flowers and sward, —
 There tragic death befell; and not one grace
 Outspread before you but is registered
 In that sinister coil these last two years
 Were occupied in winding smooth again.

"True?" Well, at least it was concluded so,
 Sworn to be truth, allowed by Law as such
 (With my concurrence, if it matter here)
 A month ago: at Vire they tried the case.

II.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda, then, . . .
 but stay!
 Permit me a preliminary word,
 And, after, all shall go so straight to end!
 Have you, the travelled lady, found yourself
 Inside a ruin, fane or bath or cirque,

¹ Box in theatre.² Set of jewels.³ Laurels.

Renowned in story, dear through youthful dream?
 If not, — imagination serves as well.
 Try fancy-land, go back a thousand years,
 Or forward, half the number, and confront
 Some work of art gnawn hollow by Time's tooth,
 Hellenic temple, Roman theatre,
 Gothic cathedral, Gallic Tuileries,
 But ruined, one and whichsoe'er you like.
 Obstructions choke what still remains intact,
 Yet proffer change that's picturesque in turn;
 Since little life begins where great life ends,
 And vegetation soon amalgamates,
 Smooth novel shape from out the shapeless old,
 Till broken column, battered cornice block
 The centre with a bulk half weeds and flowers,
 Half relics you devoutly recognise.
 Devoutly recognising, — hark, a voice
 Not to be disregarded! "Man worked here
 Once on a time; here needs again to work;
 Ruins obstruct, which man must remedy."
 Would you demur "Let Time fulfil his task,
 And, till the scythe-sweep find no obstacle,
 Let man be patient"?

The reply were prompt:
 "Glisteningly beneath the May-night moon,
 Herbage and floral coverture bedeck
 Yon splintered mass amidst the solitude:
 Wolves occupy the background, or some snake
 Glides by at distance; picturesque enough!
 Therefore, preserve it? Nay, pour daylight in, —
 The mound proves swarming with humanity.
 There never was a thorough solitude,
 Now you look nearer: mortal busy life
 First of all brought the crumbings down on pate,
 Which trip man's foot still, plague his passage much,
 And prove — what seems to you so picturesque
 To him is . . . but experiment yourself
 On how conducive to a happy home
 Will be the circumstance your bed for base
 Boasts tessellated pavement, — equally
 Affected by the scorpion for his nest, —
 While what o'erroofs bed is an architrave,
 Marble, and not unlikely to crush man
 To mummy, should its venerable prop,

Some fig-tree-stump, play traitor underneath.
 Be wise! Decide! For conservation's sake,
 Clear the arena forthwith! lest the tread
 Of too-much-ried impatience trample out
 Solid and unsubstantial to one blank
 Mud-mixture, picturesque to nobody,
 And, task done, quarrel with the parts intact
 Whence came the filtered fine dust, whence the crash
 Bides but its time to follow. Quick conclude
 Removal, time efforts so tardily,
 Of what is plain obstruction; rubbish cleared,
 Let partial-ruin stand while ruin may,
 And serve world's use, since use is manifold.
 Repair wreck, stanchion¹ wall to heart's content,
 But never think of renovation pure
 And simple, which involves creation too.
 Transform and welcome! Yon tall tower
 may help
 (Though built to be a belfry and nought else)
 Some Father Secchi² to tick Venus off
 In transit: never bring there bell again,
 To damage him aloft, brain us below,
 When new vibrations bury both in brick!"
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda, furnishing
 The application at his cost, poor soul!
 Was instanced how, — because the world lay strewn
 With ravage of opinions in his path,
 And neither he, nor any friendly wit,
 Knew and could teach him which was firm,
 which frail,
 In his adventure to walk straight through life
 The partial-ruin, — in such enterprise,
 He struggled into rubbish, struggled on,
 And stumbled out again observably.
 "Yon buttress still can back me up," he judged:
 And at a touch down came both he and it.
 "A certain statue, I was warned against,
 Now, by good fortune, lies well under foot,
 And cannot tempt to folly any more:"
 So, lifting eye, aloft since safety lay,
 What did he light on? the Idalian shape,
 The undeposed, erectly Victrix still!
 "These steps ascend the labyrinthine stair
 Whence, darkling and on all-fours, out I stand
 Exalt and safe, and bid low earth adieu —
 For so instructs 'Advice to who would climb:'"
 And all at once the climbing landed him
 — Where, is my story.

¹ Prop.² The famous astronomer.

- Take its moral first.
 Do you advise a climber? Have respect
 To the poor head, with more or less of
 brains
 To spill, should breakage follow your
 advice!
 Head-break to him will be heart-break to
 you
 For having preached "Disturb no ruins
 here!"
 Are not they crumbling of their own ac-
 cord?
 Meantime, let poets, painters keep a prize!
 Beside, a sage pedestrian picks his way."
 A sage pedestrian — such as you and I!
 10 What if there trip, in merry carelessness,
 And come to grief, a weak and foolish
 child?
 Be cautious how you counsel climbing,
 then!
- Are you adventurous and climb yourself?
 Plant the foot warily, accept a staff,
 Stamp only where you probe the standing-
 point,
 Move forward, well assured that move
 you may:
 Where you mistrust advance, stop short,
 there stick!
 This makes advancing slow and difficult?
 Hear what comes of the endeavour of
 brisk youth
 20 To foot it fast and easy! Keep this same
 Notion of outside mound and inside mash,
 Towers yet intact round turfy rottenness,
 Symbolic partial-ravage, — keep in mind!
 Here fortune placed his feet who first of all
 Found no incumbrance, till head found
 . . . But hear!
- This son and heir then of the jeweller,
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda, at his birth,
 Mixed the Castilian passionate blind blood
 With answerable gush, his mother's gift,
 30 Of spirit, French and critical and cold.
 Such mixture makes a battle in the brain,
 Ending as faith or doubt gets uppermost;
 Then will has way a moment, but no
 more:
 So nicely-balanced are the adverse
 strengths,
 That victory entails reverse next time.
 The tactics of the two are different
 And equalise the odds: for blood comes
 first,
 Surrounding life with undisputed faith.
 But presently, a new antagonist,
 40 By scarce-suspected passage in the dark,
 Steals spirit, fingers at each crevice found
 Athwart faith's stronghold, fronts the as-
 tonished man:
 "Such pains to keep me far, yet here stand
 I,
 Your doubt inside the faith-defence of
 you!"
- With faith it was friends bulwarked him
 about
 From infancy to boyhood; so, by youth,
 He stood impenetrably circuited,
 Heaven-high and low as hell: what
 lacked he thus,
 Guarded against aggression, storm or
 sap?
 What foe would dare approach? Historic
 Doubt?
 Ay, were there some half-knowledge to
 attack!
 Batter doubt's best, sheer ignorance will
 beat.
 Acumen metaphysic? — drills its way
 Through what, I wonder! A thick
 feather-bed
 Of thoughtlessness, no operating tool —
 Framed to transpire the flint-stone —
 fumbles at,
 With chance of finding an impediment!
 This Ravissante, now: when he saw the
 church
 For the first time, and to his dying-day,
 His firm belief was that the name fell fit
 6 From the Delivering Virgin, nighed and
 known;
 As if there wanted records to attest
 The appellation was a pleasantry,
 A pious rendering of Rare Vissante,
 The proper name which erst our province
 bore.
 He would have told you that Saint Alda-
 bert
 Founded the church, (Heaven early fa-
 voured France,)
 About the second century from Christ;
 Though the true man was Bishop of Raim-
 baux,
 Eleventh in succession, Eldobert,
 7 Who flourished after some six hundred
 years.
 He it was brought the image "from afar,"
 (Made out of stone the place produces still)
 "Infantine Art divinely artless," (Art
 In the decrepitude of Decadence,)
 And set it up a-working miracles
 Until the Northmen's fury laid it low,
 Not long, however: an egregious sheep,
 Zealous with scratching hoof and routing
 horn,
 Unearthed the image in good Mailleville's
 time,
 Count of the country. "If the tale be false,
 Why stands it carved above the portal
 plain?"
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda used to ask.
 To Londres went the prize in solemn
 pomp,
 But, liking old abode and loathing new,
 Was borne — this time, by angels — back
 again.
 And, reinaugurated, miracle
 Succeeded miracle, a lengthy list,

Until indeed the culmination came —
 Archbishop Chaumont prayed a prayer and
 vowed
 A vow — gained prayer and paid vow
 properly —
 For the conversion of Prince Vertgalant.
 These facts, sucked in along with mother's-
 milk,
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda would dispute
 As soon as that his hands were flesh and
 bone
 Milk-nourished two-and-twenty years
 before
 So fortified by blind Castilian blood,
 o What say you to the chances of French
 cold
 Critical spirit, should Voltaire besiege
 "Alp, Apennine, and fortified redoubt"?
 Ay, would such spirit please to play faith's
 game
 Faith's way, attack where faith defends so
 well!
 But then it shifts, tries other strategy.
 Coldness grows warmth, the critical
 becomes
 Unquestioning acceptance. "Share and
 share
 Alike in facts, to truth add other truth!
 Why with old truth needs new truth dis-
 agree?"

20 Thus doubt was found invading faith, this
 time,
 By help of not the spirit but the flesh:
 Fat Rabelais chuckled, where faith lay in
 wait
 For lean Voltaire's grimace — French,
 either foe.
 Accordingly, while round about our friend
 Ran faith without a break which learned
 eye
 Could find at two-and-twenty years of age,
 The twenty-two-years-old frank footstep
 soon
 Assured itself there spread a standing-
 space
 Flowery and comfortable, nowise rock
 30 Nor pebble-pavement roughed for cham-
 pion's tread
 Who scorns discomfort, pacing at his post.
 Tall, long-limbed, shoulder right and
 shoulder left,
 And 'twixt *acromia* ¹ such a latitude,
 Black heaps of hair on head, and blacker
 bush
 O'er-rioting chin, cheek and throat and
 chest, —
 His brown meridional temperament
 Told him — or rather pricked into his
 sense
 Plainer than language — "Pleasant station
 here!

¹ Shoulder-blades.

Youth, strength, and lustihood can sleep on
 turf
 Yet pace the stony platform afterward: 40
 First signal of a foe and up they start!
 Saint Eldobert, at all such vanity,
 Nay — sinfulness, had shaken head aus-
 tere.
 Had he? But did Prince Vertgalant?
 And yet,
 After how long a slumber, of what sort,
 Was it, he stretched octogenary joints
 And, nigh on Day-of-Judgment trumpet-
 blast,
 Jumped up and manned wall, brisk as any
 bee?"

Nor Rabelais nor Voltaire, but Sganarelle,²
 You comprehend, was pushing through the 50
 chink!
 That stager in the saint's correct costume,
 Who ever has his speech in readiness
 For thickhead juvenility at fault:
 "Go pace yon platform and play sentinel!
 You won't? The worse! but still a worse
 might hap.
 Stay then, provided that you keep in sight
 The battlement, one bold leap lands you
 by!
 Resolve not desperately 'Wall or turf,
 Choose this, choose that, but no alterna-
 tive!'
 No! Earth left once were left for good 60
 and all:
 'With Heaven you may accommodate
 yourself.'

Saint Eldobert — I much approve his
 mode;
 With sinner Vertgalant I sympathise;
 But histrionic Sganarelle, who prompts
 While pulling back, refuses yet con-
 cedes, —
 Whether he preach in chair, or print in
 book,
 Or whisper due sustainment to weak
 flesh,
 Counting his sham beads threaded on a
 lie —
 Surely, one should bid pack that mounte-
 bank!
 Surely, he must have momentary fits 70
 Of self-sufficient stage-forgetfulness,
 Escapings of the actor-lassitude
 When he allows the grace to show the grin,
 Which ought to let even thickheads recog-
 nise
 (Through all the busy and benefic part, —
 Bridge-building, or rock-riving, or good
 clean
 Transport of church and congregation both
 From this to that place with no harm at
 all,)

² See Molière.

The Devil, that old stager, at his trick
Of general utility, who leads
Downward, perhaps, but fiddles all the
way!

Therefore, no sooner does our candidate
For saintship spotlessly emerge soul-
cleansed

From First Communion to mount guard
at post,

Paris-proof, top to toe, than up there
starts

The Spirit of the Boulevard — you know
Who —

With jocund "So, a structure fixed as
fate,

10 Faith's tower joins on to tower, no ring
more round,

Full fifty years at distance, too, from youth!
Once reach that precinct and there fight

your best,
As looking back you wonder what has
come

Of daisy-dappled turf you danced across!
Few flowers that played with youth shall

pester age,
However age esteem the courtesy;

And Eldobert was something past his
prime,

Stocked Caen with churches ere he tried
hand here.

Saint-Sauveur, Notre-Dame, Saint-Pierre,
Saint-Jean

10 Attest his handiwork commenced betimes.
He probably would preach that turf is
mud.

Suppose it mud, through mud one picks a
way,

And when, clay-clogged, the struggler
steps to stone,

He uncakes shoe, arrives in manlier guise
Than carried pick-a-back by Eldobert

Big-baby-fashion, lest his leathers leak!
All that parade about Prince Vertgalant

Amounts to — your Castilian helps
enough —

Inveni ovem quæ perierat:

30 But ask the pretty votive statue-thing
What the lost sheep's meantime amuse-
ments were

Till the Archbishop found him! That
stays blank:

They washed the fleece well and forgot
the rest.

Make haste, since time flies, to determine,
though!"

Thus opportunely took up parable, —
Admonishing Miranda just emerged

Pure from The Ravissante and Paris-
proof, —

Saint Sganarelle: then slipped aside,
changed mask,

And made re-entry as a gentleman

Born of the Boulevard, with another 40
speech
I spare you.

So, the year or two revolved,
And ever the young man was dutiful
To altar and to hearth: had confidence
In the whole Ravissantish history.

Voltaire? Who ought to know so much
of him, —

Old sciolist, whom only boys think sage, —
As one whose father's house upon the Quai

Neighbour'd the very house where that
Voltaire

Died mad and raving, not without a burst
Of squibs and crackers too significant? 50

Father and mother hailed their best of
sons,

Type of obedience, domesticity,
Never such an example inside doors!

Outside, as well not keep too close a watch;
Youth must be left to some discretion there.

And what discretion proved, I find deposed
At Vire, confirmed by his own words: to
wit,

How, with the sprightliness of twenty-five,
Five — and not twenty, for he gave their
names

With laudable precision — were the few 60
Appointed by him unto mistress-ship;

While, meritoriously the whole long week
A votary of commerce only, week

Ended, "at shut of shop on Saturday,
Do I, as is my wont, get drunk," he writes

In airy record to a confidant.
"Bragging and lies!" replied the apologist:

"And do I lose by that?" laughed Some-
body

At the Court-edge a-tiptoe, mid the crowd,
In his own clothes, a-listening to men's 70
Law.

Thus while, prospectively a combatant,
The volunteer bent brows, clenched jaws,
and fierce

Whistled the march-tune "Warrior to the
wall!"

Something like flowery laughter round his
feet

Tangled him of a sudden with "Sleep
first!"

And fairly flat upon the turf sprawled he
And let strange creatures make his mouth
their home.

Anyhow, 'tis the nature of the soul
To seek a show of durability,

Nor, changing, plainly be the slave of 80
change.

Outside the turf, the towers: but, round
the turf,

A tent may rise, a temporary shroud,
Mock-faith to suit a mimic dwelling-place:

Tent which, while screening jollity inside
From the external circuit — evermore

A menace to who lags when he should march —
 Yet stands a-tremble, ready to collapse
 At touch of foot: turf is acknowledged grass,
 And grass, though pillowy, held contemptible
 Compared with solid rock, the rampired ridge.
 To truth a pretty homage thus we pay
 By testifying — what we dally with,
 Falsehood, (which, never fear we take for truth!)
 We may enjoy, but then — how we despise!

Accordingly, on weighty business bound,
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda stooped to play,
 But, with experience, soon reduced the game
 To principles, and thenceforth played by rule:
 Rule, dignifying sport as sport, proclaimed
 No less that sport was sport and nothing more.
 He understood the worth of womankind, —
 To furnish man — provisionally — sport:
 Sport transitive — such earth's amusements are:
 But, seeing that amusements pall by use,
 Variety therein is requisite.
 And since the serious work of life were wronged
 Should we bestow importance on our play,
 It follows, in such womankind-pursuit,
 Cheating is lawful chase. We have to spend
 An hour — they want a lifetime thrown away:
 We seek to tickle sense — they ask for soul,
 As if soul had no higher ends to serve!
 A stag-hunt gives the royal creature law:
 Bat-fowling is all fair with birds at roost,
 The lantern and the claret suit the hedge.
 Which must explain why, bent on Boulevard game,
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda decently
 Was prudent in his pleasure — passed himself
 Off on the fragile fair about his path
 As the gay devil rich in mere good looks,
 Youth, hope — what matter though the purse be void?
 "If I were only young Miranda, now,
 Instead of a poor clerkly drudge at desk
 All day, poor artist vainly bruising brush
 On palette, poor musician scraping gut
 With horseshair teased that no harmonics come!
 Then would I love with liberality,
 Then would I pay! — who now shall be repaid,

Repaid alike for present pain and past,
 If Mademoiselle permit the contre-danse,
 Sing 'Gay in garret youth at twenty lives,'
 And afterward accept a lemonade!"
 Such sweet facilities of intercourse
 Afford the Winter-Garden and Mabilie!
 "Oh, I unite" — runs on the confidence, 50
 Poor fellow, that was read in open Court,
 — "Amusement with discretion: never fear
 My escapades cost more than market-price!
 No durably-attached Miranda-dupe,
 Sucked dry of substance by two clinging lips,
 Promising marriage, and performing it!
 Trust me, I know the world, and know myself,
 And know where duty takes me — in good time!"

Thus fortified and realistic, then,
 At all points thus against illusion armed, 60
 He wisely did New Year inaugurate
 By playing truant to the favoured five:
 And sat installed at "The Varieties," —
 Playhouse appropriately named, — to note
 (Prying amid the turf that's flowery there)
 What primrose, firstling of the year, might push
 The snows aside to deck his button-hole —
 Unnoticed by that outline sad, severe,
 (Though fifty good long years removed from youth)
 That tower and tower, — our image, bear 70
 in mind!

No sooner was he seated than, behold,
 Out burst a polyanthus! He was 'ware
 Of a young woman niched in neighbourhood;
 And ere one moment flitted, fast was he
 Found captive to the beauty evermore,
 For life, for death, for heaven, for hell, her own.
 Philosophy, bewail thy fate! Adieu,
 Youth realistic and illusion-proof!
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda, — hero late
 Who "understood the worth of woman-kind," 80
 "Who found therein — provisionally — sport," —
 Felt, in the fitting of a moment, fool
 Was he, and folly all that seemed so wise,
 And the best proof of wisdom's birth would be
 That he made all endeavour, body, soul,
 By any means, at any sacrifice
 Of labour, wealth, repute, and (— well, the time
 For choosing between heaven on earth, and heaven
 In heaven, was not at hand immediately—)

Made all endeavour, without loss incurred
Of one least minute, to obtain her love.
"Sport transitive?" "Variety required?"
"In loving were a lifetime thrown away?"
How singularly may young men mistake!
The fault must be repaired with energy.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda ate her up
With eye-devouring; when the uncon-
scious fair
Passed from the close-packed hall, he
pressed behind;
10 She mounted vehicle, he did the same,
Coach stopped, and cab fast followed, at
one door —
Good house in unexceptionable street.
Out stepped the lady, — never think,
alone!
A mother was not wanting to the maid,
Or, may be, wife, or widow, might one
say?
Out stepped and properly down flung him-
self
Monsieur Léonce Miranda at her feet —
And never left them after, so to speak,
For twenty years, till his last hour of life,
20 When he released them, as precipitate.
Love proffered and accepted then and
there!
Such potency in word and look has truth.

Truth I say, truth I mean: this love was
true,
And the rest happened by due consequence.
By which we are to learn that there exists
A falsish false, for truth's inside the same,
And truth that's only half true, falsish
truth.
The better for both parties! folk may
taunt
That half your rock-built wall is rubble-
heap:
30 Answer them, half their flowery turf is
stones!
Our friend had hitherto been decking coat
If not with stones, with weeds that stones
befit,
With dandelions — "primrose-buds,"
smirked he;
This proved a polyanthus on his breast,
Prize-lawful or prize-lawless, flower the
same.
So with his other instance of mistake:
Was Christianity the Ravissante?
And what a flower of flowers he chanced
on now!
To primrose, polyanthus I prefer
40 As illustration, from the fancy-fact
That out of simple came the composite
By culture: that the florist bedded thick
His primrose-root in ruddle,¹ bullock's
blood,

¹ Red earth or chalk.

Ochre and devils'-dung, for aught I know,
Until the pale and pure grew fiery-fine,
Ruby and topaz, rightly named anew.
This lady was no product of the plain;
Social manure had raised a rarity.
Clara de Millefleurs (note the happy name
Blazed in the full-blown glory of her
Spring.
Peerlessly perfect, form and face: for
both —
"Imagine what, at seventeen, may have
proved
Miss Pages, the actress: Pages herself, my
dear!"
Noble she was, the name denotes: and
rich?
"The apartment in this Coliseum Street,
Furnished, my dear, with such an elegance,
Testifies wealth, my dear, sufficiently!
What quality, what style and title, eh?
Well now, waive nonsense, you and I are
boys
No longer: somewhere must a screw be 60
slack!
Don't fancy, Duchesses descend at door
From carriage-step to stranger prostrate
stretched,
And bid him take heart, and deliver mind,
March in and make himself at ease forth-
with, —
However broad his chest and black his
beard,
And comely his belongings, — all through
love
Protested in a world of ways save one
Hinting at marriage!" — marriage which
yet means
Only the obvious method, easiest help
To satisfaction of love's first demand, 70
That love endure eternally: "my dear,
Somewhere or other must a screw be
slack!"

Truth is the proper policy: from truth —
Whate'er the force wherewith you fling
your speech, —
Be sure that speech will lift you, by re-
bound,
Somewhere above the lowness of a lie!
Monsieur Léonce Miranda heard too true
A tale — perhaps I may subjoin, too trite!
As the meek martyr takes her statued stand
Above our pity, claims our worship just 80
Because of what she puts in evidence,
Signal of suffering, badge of torture borne
In days gone by, shame then but glory
now,
Barb, in the breast, turned aureole for the
front!
So, half timidity, composure half,
Clara de Millefleurs told her martyrdom.

Of poor though noble parentage, deprived
Too early of a father's guardianship,

What wonder if the prodigality
Of nature in the girl, whose mental gifts
Matched her external dowry, form and
face —

If these suggested a too prompt resource
To the resourceless mother? "Try the
Stage

And so escape starvation! Prejudice
Defames Mimetic Art: be yours to prove
That gold and dross may meet and never
mix,

Purity plunge in pitch yet soil no plume!"

10 All was prepared in London — (you con-
ceive

The natural shrinking from publicity
In Paris, where the name excites remark)
London was ready for the grand *début*;
When some perverse ill-fortune, incident
To art mimetic, some malicious thrust
Of Jealousy who sidles 'twixt the scenes
Or pops up sudden from the prompter's
hole,

Somehow the brilliant bubble bursts in
suds.

Want followed: in a foreign land, the pair!

20 O hurry over the catastrophe —
Mother too sorely tempted, daughter tried
Scarcely so much as circumvented, say!
Caged unsuspecting artless innocence!

Monsieur Léonce Miranda tell the rest! —
The rather that he told it in a style
To puzzle Court Guide students, much
more me.

"Brief, she became the favourite of
Lord N.,

An aged but illustrious Duke, thereby
Breaking the heart of his competitor

30 The Prince of O. Behold her palaced
straight

In splendour, clothed in diamonds"
(phrase how fit!),

"Giving tone to the City by the Thames!
Lord N., the aged but illustrious Duke,
Was even on the point of wedding her,
Giving his name to her" (why not to us?)

"But that her better angel interposed.
She fled from such a fate to Paris back,
A fortnight since: conceive Lord N.'s de-
spair!

40 Duke as he is, there's no invading France.
He must restrict pursuit to postal plague
Of writing letters daily, duly read

As daintily she hands them to myself,
The privileged supplanter, who therewith
Light a cigar and see abundant blue" —
(Either of heaven or else Havanna-smoke.)

"Think! she, who helped herself to dia-
monds late,

In passion of disinterestedness
Now — will accept no tribute of my love
Beyond a paltry ring, three Louis'-worth!

50 Little she knows I have the rummaging

Of old Papa's shop in the Place. Ven-
dôme!"

So wrote entrancedly to confident
Monsieur Léonce Miranda. Surely now,
If Heaven, that sees all, understands no
less,

It finds temptation pardonable here,
It mitigates the promised punishment,
It recognises that to tarry just
An April hour amid such dainty turf
Means no rebellion against task imposed
Of journey to the distant wall one day? 60

Monsieur Léonce Miranda puts the case!
Love, he is purposed to renounce, abjure;
But meanwhile, is the case a common one?
Is it the vulgar sin, none hates as he?

Which question, put directly to "his dear"
(His brother — I will tell you in a trice)
Was doubtless meant, by due meandering,
To reach, to fall not unobserved before
The auditory cavern 'neath the cope

Of Her, the placable, the Ravissante. 70

But here's the drawback, that the image
smiles,

Smiles on, smiles ever, says to suppliant
"Ay, ay, ay" — like some kindly weather-
cock

Which, stuck fast at Set Fair, Favonian
Breeze,¹

Still warrants you from rain, though
Auster's lead

Bring down the sky above your cloakless
mirth.

Had he proposed this question to, nor
"dear"

Nor Ravissante, but prompt to the Police.
The Commissary of his Quarter, now —

There had been shaggy eyebrows elevate 80
With twinkling apprehension in each orb
Beneath, and when the sudden shut of
mouth

Relaxed, — lip pressing lip, lest out should
plump

The pride of knowledge in too frank a
flow, —

Then, fact on fact forthcoming, dose were
dealt

Of truth remedial in sufficiency
To save a chicken threatened with the pip,
Head-staggers and a tumble from its perch.

Alack, it was the lady's self that made
The revelation, after certain days 90

— Nor so unwisely! As the haschisch-
man

Prepares a novice to receive his drug,
Adroitly hides the soil with sudden spread

Of carpet ere he seats his customer:
Then shows him how to smoke himself
about

With Paradise; and only when, at puff
Of pipe, the Houri dances round the brain

¹ West wind.

Of dreamer, does he judge no need is now
For circumspection and punctiliousness;
He may resume the serviceable scrap
That made the votary unaware of muck.
Just thus the lady, when her brewage —
love —

Was well a-fume about the novice-brain,
Saw she might boldly pluck from under-
neath
Her lover the preliminary lie.

10 Clara de Millefleurs, of the noble race,
Was Lucie Steiner, child to Dominique
And Magdalen Commercy; born at Sierck,
About the bottom of the Social Couch.
The father having come and gone again,
The mother and the daughter found their
way

To Paris, and professed mode-merchandise
Were milliners, we English roughlier say;
And soon a fellow-lodger in the house,
Monsieur Ulysse Muhlhausen, young and
smart,
Tailor by trade, perceived his housemate's
youth,

20 Smartness, and beauty over and above.
Courtship was brief, and marriage followed
quick,

And quicker — impecuniosity.
The young pair quitted Paris to reside
At London: which repaid the compliment
But scurvily, since not a whit the more
Trade prospered by the Thames than by
the Seine.

Failing all other, as a last resource,
"He would have trafficked in his wife,"
— she said.

If for that cause they quarrelled, 'twas, I
fear,

30 Rather from reclamation of her rights
To wifely independence, than as wronged
Otherwise by the course of life proposed:
Since, on escape to Paris back again
From horror and the husband, — ill-ex-
changed

For safe maternal home recovered thus, —
I find her domiciled and dominant
In that apartment, Coliseum Street,
Where all the splendid magic met and
mazed

40 Monsieur Léonce Miranda's venturous eye.
Only, the same was furnished at the cost
Of someone notable in days long since,
Carlino Centofanti: he it was
Found entertaining unawares — if not
An angel, yet a youth in search of one.
Why this revelation after reticence?
Wherefore, beginning "Millefleurs," end
at all

Steiner, Muhlhausen, and the ugly rest?
Because the unsocial purse-comptrolling
wight,

Carlino Centofanti, — made aware

50 By misadventure that his bounty, crumbs

From table, comforted a visitant, —
Took churlish leave, and left, too, debts to
pay.

Loaded with debts, the lady needs must
bring

Her soul to bear assistance from a friend
Beside that paltry ring, three Louis'-worth;
And therefore might the little circumstance
That Monsieur Léonce had the rummaging
Of old Papa's shop in the Place Vendôme
Pass, perhaps, not so unobservably.

Frail shadow of a woman in the flesh, 60

These very eyes of mine saw yesterday,
Would I re-tell this story of your woes,
Would I have heart to do you detriment
By pinning all this shame and sorrow plain
To that poor *chignon*, — staying with me
still,

Though form and face have well-nigh
faded now, —

But that men read it, rough in brutal print,
As two years since some functionary's
voice

Rattled all this — and more by very
much —

Into the ear of vulgar Court and crowd? 70

Whence, by reverberation, rumblings grew
To what had proved a week-long roar in
France,

Had not the dreadful cannonry drowned
all.

Was, now, the answer of your advocate
More than just this? "The shame fell
long ago,

The sorrow keeps increasing: God forbid
We judge man by the faults of youth in
age!"

Permit me the expression of a hope
Your youth proceeded like your avenue,
Stepping by bush, and tree, and taller tree, 80
Until, columnar, at the house they end.
So might your creeping youth columnar
rise

And reach, by year and year, symmetrical,
To where all shade stops short, shade's
service done.

Bushes on either side, and boughs above,
Darken, deform the path else sun would
streak;

And, cornered half-way somewhere, I sus-
pect

Stagnation and a horse-pond: hurry past!
For here's the house, the happy half-and-
half

Existence — such as stands for happiness 90
True and entire, howe'er the squeamish
talk!

Twenty years long, you may have loved
this man;

He must have loved you; that's a pleasant
life,

Whatever was your right to lead the same.
The white domestic pigeon pairs secure,

Nay, does mere duty by bestowing egg
In authorised compartment, warm and
safe,

Boarding about, and gilded spire above,
Hoisted on pole; to dogs' and cats' despair!
But I have spied a veriest trap of twigs
On tree-top, every straw a thievery,
Where the wild dove — despite the fowler's
snare,

The sportsman's shot, the urchin's stone,
— crooned gay,

And solely gave her heart to what she
hatched,

o Nor minded a malignant world below.
I throw first stone forsooth? 'Tis mere
assault

Of playful sugarplum against your cheek,
Which, if it makes cheek tingle, wipes off
rouge!

You, my worst woman? Ah, that touches
pride,

Puts on his mettle the exhibitor
Of Night-caps, if you taunt him "This,
no doubt, —

Now we have got to Female-garniture, —
Crowns your collection, Reddest of the
row!"

O unimaginative ignorance

20 Of what dye's depth keeps best apart from
worst

In womankind! — how heaven's own pure
may seem

To blush aurorally beside such blanched
Divineness as the women-wreaths named
White:

While hell, eruptive and fuliginous,
Sickens to very pallor as I point

Her place to a Red clout called woman too!
Hail, heads that ever had such glory once
Touch you a moment, like God's cloven
tongues

Of fire! your lambent aureoles lost may
leave

30 You marke' yet, dear beyond true dia-
dems

And hold, each foot, nor spurn, to man's
disgrace,

What other twist of fetid rag may fall!
Let sink into the sewer the cupping-cloth!

Lucie, much solaced, I re-finger you,
The medium article; if ruddy-marked
With iron-mould, your cambric, — clean at
least

From poison-speck of rot and purulence.
Lucie Muhlhause said — "Such thing
am I:

Love me, or love me no'!" Miranda said

40 "I do love, more than ever, most for this."
The revelation of the very truth

Proved the concluding necessary shake
Which bids the tardy mixture crystallise
Or else stay ever liquid: shoot up shaft,
Durably diamond, or evaporate —

Sluggish solution through a minute's slip.
Monsieur Léonce Miranda took his soul
In both his hands, as if it were a vase,
To see what came of the convulsion there,
And found, amid subsidence, love new-born 50
So sparkingly resplendent, old was new.

"Whatever be my lady's present, past,
Or future, this is certain of my soul,
I love her: in despite of all I know,
Defiance of the much I have to fear,
I venture happiness on what I hope,
And love her from this day for evermore:
No prejudice to old profound respect
For certain Powers! I trust they bear in
mind

A most peculiar case, and straighten out 60
What's crooked there, before we close
accounts.

Renounce the world for them — some day
I will:

Meantime, to me let her become the
world!"

Thus mutely might our friend soliloquise
Over the tradesmen's bills, his Clara's
gift —

In the apartment, Coliseum Street,
Carlino Centofanti's legacy,
Provided rent and taxes were discharged —
In face of Steiner now, De Millefleurs once,
The tailor's wife and runaway confessed. 70

On such a lady if election light,
(According to a social prejudice)
If henceforth "all the world" she con-
stitute

For any lover, — needs must he renounce
Our world in ordinary, walked about
By couples loving as its laws prescribe, —
Renunciation sometimes difficult.
But, in this instance, time and place and
thing

Combined to simplify experiment,
And make Miranda, in the current phrase, 80
Master the situation passably.

For first facility, his brother died —
Who was, I should have told you, confidant,
Adviser, referee and substitute,
All from a distance: but I knew how soon
This younger brother, lost in Portugal,
Had to depart and leave our friend at large.

Cut off abruptly from companionship
With brother soul of bulk about as big,
(Obvious recipient — by intelligence 90
And sympathy, poor little pair of souls —
Of much affection and some foolishness)
Monsieur Léonce Miranda, meant to lean
By nature, needs must shift the leaning-
place

To his love's bosom from his brother's
neck.

Or fall flat unrelieved of freight sublime.

Next died the lord of the Aladdin's cave,
Master o' the mint and keeper of the keys

Of chests chokeful with gold and silver
changed

By Art to forms where wealth forgot itself,
And caskets where reposed each pullet-egg
Of diamond, slipping flame from fifty
slants.

In short, the father of the family
Took his departure also from our scene,
Leaving a fat succession to his heir
Monsieur Léonce Miranda, — "fortunate
If ever man was, in a father's death,"
10 (So commented the world, — not he, too
kind,

Could that be, rather than scarce kind
enough)

Indisputably fortunate so far,
That little of incumbrance in his path,
Which money kicks aside, would lie there
long.

And finally, a rough but wholesome shock,
An accident which comes to kill or cure,
A jerk which mends a dislocated joint!
Such happy chance, at cost of twinge, no
doubt,

20 Into the socket back again put truth,
And stopped the limb from longer dragging
lie.

For love suggested "Better shamle on,
And bear your lameness with what grace
you may!"

And but for this rude wholesome accident,
Continuance of disguise and subterfuge,
Retention of first falsehood as to name
And nature in the lady, might have proved
Too necessary for abandonment.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda probably
Had else been loth to cast the mask aside,

30 So politic, so self-preservative,
Therefore so pardonable — though so
wrong!

For see the bugbear in the background!
Breathe

But ugly name, and wind is sure to waft
The husband news of the wife's where-
about:

From where he lies perdue in London
town,

Forth steps the needy tailor on the stage,
Deity-like from dusk machine of fog,
And claims his consort, or his consort's
worth

In rubies which her price is far above.

40 Hard to propitiate, harder to oppose, —
Who but the man's self came to banish
fear,

A pleasant apparition, such as shocks
A moment, tells a tale, then goes for good!

Monsieur Ulysse Muhlhausen proved no
less

Nor more than "Gustave," lodging oppo-
site

Monsieur Léonce Miranda's diamond-cave

And ruby-mine, and lacking little thence
Save that its gnome would keep the captive
safe,

Never return his Clara to his arms.

For why? He was become the man in 50
vogue,

The indispensable to who went clothed
Nor cared encounter Paris-fashion's
blame, —

Such miracle could London absence work.
Rolling in riches — so translate "the
vogue" —

Rather his object was to keep off claw
Should griffin scent the gold, should wife
lay claim

To lawful portion at a future day,
Than tempt his partner from her private
spoils.

Best forage each for each, nor coupled
hunt!

Pursuantly, one morning, — knock at door 60
With knuckle, dry authoritative cough,
And easy stamp of foot, broke startlingly
On household slumber, Coliseum Street:
"Admittance in the name of Law!" In
marched

The Commissary and subordinate.

One glance sufficed them. "A marital
pair:

We certify, and bid good morning, sir!
Madame, a thousand pardons!" Where-
upon

Monsieur Ulysse Muhlhausen, otherwise
Called "Gustave" for convenience of trade, 70
Deposing in due form complaint of wrong,
Made his demand of remedy — divorce
From bed, board, share of name, and part
in goods.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda owned his
fault,

Tested his pure ignorance, from first
To last, of rights infringed in "Gustave's"
case:

Submitted him to judgment. Law decreed
"Body and goods be henceforth separate!"

And thereupon each party took its way,
This right, this left, rejoicing, to abide 80

Estranged yet amicable, opposites
In life as in respective dwelling-place.

Still does one read on his establishment
Huge-lettered "Gustave," — gold out-
glittering

"Miranda, goldsmith," just across the
street —

"A first-rate hand at riding-habits" — say
The instructed — "special cut of chamber-
robes."

Thus by a rude in seeming — rightlier
judged

Beneficent surprise, publicity
Stopped further fear and trembling, and 90
what tale

Cowardice thinks a covert: one bold splash
Into the mid-shame, and the shiver ends,
Though cramp and drowning may begin
perhaps.

To cite just one more point which crowned
success:

Madame, Miranda's mother, most of all
An obstacle to his projected life
In licence, as a daughter of the Church,
Duteous, exemplary, severe by right —
Moreover one most thoroughly beloved
Without a rival till the other sort
Possessed her son, — first storm of anger
spent,

She seemed, though grumblingly and
grudgingly,
To let be what needs must be, acquiesce.
"With Heaven — accommodation possible!"

Saint Sganarelle had preached with such
effect,

She saw now mitigating circumstance.
"The erring one was most unfortunate,
No question: but worse Magdalens repent.
Were Clara free, did only Law allow,

What fitter choice in marriage could have
made

Léonce or anybody?" 'Tis alleged
And evidenced, I find, by advocate
"Never did she consider such a tie
As baleful, springe to snap whate'er the
cost."

And when the couple were in safety once
At Clairvaux, motherly, considerate,
She shrank not from advice. "Since safe
you be,

Safely abide! for winter, I know well,
Is troublesome in a cold country-house.
I recommend the south room, that we
styled,

Your sire and I, the winter-chamber."

Chance

Or purpose, — who can read the mystery? —

Combined, I say, to bid "Entrench yourself,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda, on this turf,
About this flower, so firmly that, as tent
Rises on every side around you both,
The question shall become, — Which
arrogates

Stability, this tent or those far towers?
May not the temporary structure suit
The stable circuit, co-exist in peace? —
Always until the proper time, no fear!
'Lay flat your tent!' is easier said than
done."

So, with the best of auspices, betook
Themselves Léonce Miranda and his
bride —

Provisionary — to their Clairvaux house,

Never to leave it — till the proper time.

I told you what was Clairvaux-Priory
Ere the improper time: an old demesne
With memories, — relic half, and ruin
whole, —

The very place, then, to repair the wits 50
Worn out with Paris-traffic, when its lord,
Miranda's father, took his month of ease
Purchased by industry. What contrast
here!

Repose, and solitude, and healthy ways.
That ticking at the back of head, he took
For motion of an inmate, stopped at once,
Proved nothing but the pavement's rattle
left

Behind at Paris: here was holiday.
Welcome the quaint succeeding to the
spruce,

The large and lumbersome and — night 60
he breathe

In whisper to his own ear — dignified
And gentry-fashioned old-style haunts of
sleep!

Palatial gloomy chambers for parade,
And passage-lengths of lost significance,
Never constructed as receptacle,
At his odd hours, for him their actual lord
By dint of diamond-dealing, goldsmithry.
Therefore Miranda's father chopped and
changed

Nor roof-tile nor yet floor-brick, undis-
maged

By rains atop or rats at bottom there. 70
Such contrast is so piquant for a month!
But now arrived quite other occupants
Whose cry was "Permanency, — life and
death

Here, here, not elsewhere, change is all we
dread!"

Their dwelling-place must be adapted,
then,

To inmates, no mere truants from the
town,

No temporary sojourners, forsooth,
At Clairvaux: change it into Paradise!

Fair friend, — who listen and let talk,
alas! —

You would, in even such a state of things, 80
Pronounce, — or am I wrong? — for
bidding stay

The old-world inconvenience, fresh as
found.

All folk of individuality
Prefer to be reminded now and then,
Though at the cost of vulgar cosiness,
That the shell-outside only harbours man
The vital and progressive, meant to build,
When build he may, with quite a difference,
Some time, in that far land we dream about,
Where every man is his own architect. 90

But then the couple here in question, each
At one in project for a happy life,

Were by no acceptation of the word
So individual that they must aspire
To architecture all-appropriate
And, therefore, in this world impossible:
They needed house to suit the circum-
stance,

Proprietors, not tenants for a term.
Despite a certain marking, here and there,
Of fleecy black or white distinguishment,
These vulgar sheep wore the flock's uni-
form.

10 They love the country, they renounce the
town?

They gave a kick, as our Italians say,
To Paris ere it turned and kicked them-
selves!

Acquaintances might prove too hard to
seek,

Or the reverse of hard to find, perchance,
Since Monsieur Gustave's apparition there.
And let me call remark upon the list
Of notabilities invoked, in Court

At Vire, to witness, by their phrases culled
From correspondence, what was the
esteem

20 Of those we pay respect to, for "the pair
Whereof they knew the inner life," 'tis
said.

Three, and three only, answered the ap-
peal.

First, Monsieur Vaillant, music-publisher,
"Begs Madame will accept civilities."

Next, Alexandre Dumas, — sire, not son, —
"Sends compliments to Madame and to
you."

And last — but now prepare for England's
voice!

I will not mar nor make — here's word for
word —

30 "A rich proprietor of Paris, he
To whom belonged that beauteous *Baga-
telle*

Close to the wood of Boulogne, Hertford
height,

Assures of homages and compliments
Affectionate — not now Miranda but
"Madame Muhlhausen." (Was this
friend, the Duke

Redoubtable in rivalry before?)
Such was the evidence when evidence
Was wanted, then if ever, to the worth
Whereat acquaintances in Paris prized
Monsieur Léonce Miranda's household
charm.

40 No wonder, then, his impulse was to live,
In Norman solitude, the Paris life:
Surround himself with Art transported
thence,

And nature like those famed Elysian
Fields:

Then, warm up the right colour out of both,
By Boulevard friendships tempted to come
taste

How Paris lived again in little there.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda practised Art.
Do let a man for once live as man likes!
Politics? Spend your life, to spare the
world's:

Improve each unit by some particle
Of joy the more, deteriorate the orb
Entire, your own: poor profit, dismal loss!
Write books, paint pictures, or make music
— since

Your nature leans to such life-exercise!
Ay, but such exercise begins too soon,
Concludes too late, demands life whole and
sole

Artistry being battle with the age
It lives in! Half life, — silence, while you
learn

What has been done; the other half, —
attempt
At speech, amid world's wail of wonder-
ment —

"Here's something done was never done
before!"

To be the very breath that moves the age
Means not to have breath drive you bubble-
like

Before it — but yourself to blow: that's
strain;

Strain's worry through the life-time, till
there's peace;

We know where peace expects the artist-
soul.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda knew as much.
Therefore in Art he nowise cared to be
Creative; but creation, that had birth

In storminess long years before was born 70
Monsieur Léonce Miranda, — Art, enjoyed

Like fleshly objects of the chace that tempt
In coquetry, not in capture — these might
feast

The dilettante, furnish tavern-fare
Open to all with purses open too.

To sit free and take tribute *seigneur*-like —
Now, not too lavish of acknowledgment,
Now, self-indulgently profuse of pay,
Always Art's *seigneur*, not Art's serving-
man

Whate'er the style and title and degree, — 80
That is the quiet life and easy death

Monsieur Léonce Miranda would approve
Wholly — provided (back I go again
To the first simile) that while glasses clink,
And viands steam, and banqueting laughs
high,

All that's outside the temporary tent,
The dim grim outline of the circuit-wall,
Forgets to menace "Soon or late will drop
Pavilion, soon or late you needs must
march,

And laggards will be sorry they were slack! 90
Always — unless excuse sound plausible!"

Monsieur Léonce Miranda knew as much:
Whence his determination just to paint

So creditably as might help the eye
To comprehend how painter's eye grew dim

Ere it produced L'Ingegno's¹ piece of work —

So to become musician that his ear
Should judge, by its own tickling and turmoil,

Who made the Solemn Mass might well die deaf —

So cultivate a literary knack
That, by experience how it wiles the time,
He might imagine how a poet, rapt
In rhyming wholly, grew so poor at last
By carelessness about his banker's-book
That the Sieur Boileau (to provoke our smile)

Began abruptly, — when he paid devoir
To Louis Quatorze as he dined in state,
"Sire, send a drop of broth to Pierre
Corneille

Now dying and in want of sustenance!"
— I say, these half-hour playings at life's
toil,

Diversified by billiards, riding, sport —
With now and then a visitor — Dumas,
Hertford — to check no aspiration's
flight —

While Clara, like a diamond in the dark,
Should extract shining from what else were
shade,

And multiply chance rays a million-fold, —
How could he doubt that all offence out-
side, —

Wrong to the towers, which, pillowed on
the turf,

He thus shut eyes to, — were as good as
gone?

So, down went Clairvaux-Priory to dust,
And up there rose, in lieu, yon structure
gay

Above the Norman ghosts: and where the
stretch

Of barren country girdled house about,
Behold the Park, the English preference!
Thus made undoubtedly a desert smile
Monsieur Léonce Miranda. —

Ay, but she?

One should not so merge soul in soul, you
think?

And I think: only, let us wait, nor want
Two things at once — her turn will come
in time.

A cork-float danced upon the tide, we saw,
This morning, blinding-bright with briny
dews:

There was no disengaging soaked from
sound,

Earth-product from the sister-element.
But when we turn, the tide will turn, I
think,

¹ G-nius.

And bare on beach will lie exposed the
buoy:

A very proper time to try, with foot
And even finger, which was buoying wave,
Which merely buoyant substance, — power
to lift,

And power to be sent skyward passively.
Meanwhile, no separation of the pair!

III.

And so slept pleasantly away five years
Of Paradisiac dream; till, as there flit
Premonitory symptoms, pricks of pain, 5:
Because the dreamer has to start awake
And find disease dwelt active all the while
In head or stomach through his night-long
sleep, —

So happened here disturbance to content.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda's last of cares,
Ere he composed himself, had been to make
Provision that, while sleeping safe he lay,
Somebody else should, dragon-like, let fall
Never a lid, coiled round the apple-stem,
But watch the précieux fruitage. Some- 60
body

Kept shop, in short, played Paris-substitute.
Himself, shrewd, well-trained, early-
exercised,

Could take in, at an eye-glance, luck or
loss —

Know commerce throve, though lazily up-
lift

On elbow merely: leave his bed, forsooth?
Such active service was the substitute's.

But one October morning, at first drop
Of appled gold, first summons to be grave
Because rough Autumn's play turns ear-
nest now,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda was required 70
In Paris to take counsel, face to face,
With Madame-mother: and be rated, too,
Roundly at certain items of expense
Whereat the government provisional,
The Paris substitute and shopkeeper,
Shook head, and talked of funds inade-
quate:

Oh, in the long run, — not if remedy
Occurred betimes! Else, — tap the gen-
erous bole

Too near the quick, — it withers to the
root —

Leafy, prolific, golden apple-tree, 80
"Miranda," sturdy in the Place Vendôme!

"What is this reckless life you lead?"
began

Her greeting she whom most he feared and
loved,

Madame Miranda. "Luxury, extrava-
gance

Sardanapalus' self might emulate, —
Did your good father's money go for this?

- Where are the fruits of education, where
The morals which at first distinguished
you,
The faith which promised to adorn your
age?
And why such wastefulness outbreking
now,
When heretofore you loved economy?
Explain this pulling-down and building-up
Poor Clairvaux, which your father bought
because
Clairvaux he found it, and so left to you,
Not a gilt-gingerbread big baby-house!
10 True, we could somehow shake head and
shut eye
To what was past prevention on our part —
This reprehensible illicit bond:
We, in a manner, winking, watched con-
sort
Our modest well-conducted pious son
With Dalilah: we thought the smoking
flax
Would smoulder soon away and end in
snuff.
Is spark to strengthen, prove consuming
fire?
No lawful family calls Clairvaux 'home' —
Why play that fool of Scripture whom the
voice
20 Admonished 'Whose to-night shall be those
things
Provided for thy morning jollity?'
To take one specimen of pure caprice
Out of the heap conspicuous in the plan, —
Puzzle of change, I call it, — titled big
'Clairvaux Restored:' what means this
Belvedere?
This Tower, stuck like a fool's-cap on the
roof —
Do you intend to soar to heaven from
thence?
Tower, truly! Better had you planted
turf —
More fitly would you dig yourself a hole
30 Beneath it for the final journey's help!
O we poor parents — could we prophesy!"
Léonce was found affectionate enough
To man, to woman, child, bird, beast, alike;
But all affection, all one fire of heart
Flaming toward Madame-mother. Had
she posed
The question plainly at the outset "Choose!
Cut clean in half your all-the-world of love,
The mother and the mistress: then resolve,
Take me or take her, throw away the
one!" —
40 He might have made the choice and marred
my tale.
But, much I apprehend, the problem put
Was "Keep both halves, yet do no detri-
ment
To either! Prize each opposite in turn!"
Hence, while he prized at worth the Clair-
vaux-life
- With all its tolerated naughtiness,
He, visiting in fancy Quai Rousseau,
Saw, cornered in the cosiest nook of all
That range of rooms through number
Thirty-three,
The lady-mother bent o'er her *bézique*;
While Monsieur Curé This, and Sister 54
That —
Superior of no matter what good House —
Did duty for Duke Hertford and Dumas,
Nay — at his mother's age — for Clara's
self.
At Quai Rousseau, things comfortable
thus,
Why should poor Clairvaux prove so
troublesome?
She played at cards, he built a Belvedere.
But here's the difference: she had reached
the Towers
And there took pastime: he was still on
Turf —
Though fully minded that, when once he
marched,
No sportive fancy should distract him more. 60
In brief, the man was angry with himself,
With her, with all the world and much
beside:
And so the unseemly words were inter-
changed
Which crystallise what else evaporates,
And make mere misty petulance grow hard
And sharp inside each softness, heart and
soul.
Monsieur Léonce Miranda flung at last
Out of doors, fever-flushed: and there the
Seine
Rolled at his feet, obsequious remedy
For fever, in a cold Autumnal flow. 70
"Go and be rid of memory in a bath!"
Craftily whispered Who besets the ear
On such occasions.
- Done as soon as dreamed.
Back shivers poor Léonce to bed — where
else?
And there he lies a month 'twixt life and
death,
Raving, "Remorse of conscience!"
friends opine.
"Sirs, it may partly prove so," represents
Beaumont — (the family physician, he
Whom last year's Commune murdered,
do you mind?)
Beaumont reports "There is some active 80
cause,
More than mere pungency of quarrel
past, —
Cause that keeps adding other food to fire.
I hear the words and know the signs, I say!
Dear Madame, you have read the Book of
Saints,
How Antony was tempted? As for me,
Poor heathen, 'tis by pictures I am taught.

I say then, I see standing here, — between
Me and my patient, and that crucifix
You very properly would interpose, —
A certain woman-shape, one white appeal
'Will you leave me, then, me, me, me for
her?'

Since cold Seine could not quench this
flame, since flare

Of fever does not redden it away, —
Be rational, indulgent, mute — should
chance

Come to the rescue — Providence, I
mean —

10 The while I blister and phlebotomise!"

Well, somehow rescued by whatever power,
At month's end, back again conveyed him-
self

Monsieur Léonce Miranda, worn to rags,
Nay, tinder: stuff irreparably spoiled,
Though kindly hand should stitch and
patch its best.

Clairvaux in Autumn is restorative.

A friend stitched on, patched over. All
the same,

Clairvaux looked greyer than a month
ago.

Unglossed was shrubbery, unglorified

20 Each copse, so wealthy once; the garden-
plots,

The orchard-walks showed dearth and
dreariness.

The sea lay out at distance crammed by
cloud

Into a leaden wedge; and sorrowful
Sulked field and pasture with persistent
rain.

Nobody came so far from Paris now:

Friends did their duty by an invalid
Whose convalescence claimed entire repose.

Only a single ministrant was staunch

At quiet reparation of the stuff —

30 Monsieur Léonce Miranda, worn to rags,
But she was Clara and the world beside.

Another month, the year packed up his
plagues

And sullenly departed, pedlar-like,

As apprehensive old-world ware might
show

To disadvantage when the new-comer,
Merchant of novelties, young 'Sixty-eight,
With brand-new bargains, whistled o'er the
lea.

Things brightened somewhat o'er the
Christmas hearth,

As Clara plied assiduously her task.

40 "Words are but words and wind. Why
let the wind

Sing in your ear, bite, sounding, to your
brain?

Old folk and young folk, still at odds, of
course!

Age quarrels because spring puts forth a
leaf

While winter has a mind that boughs stay
bare;

Or rather — worse than quarrel — age
describes

Propriety in preaching life to death.

'Enjoy nor youth, nor Clairvaux, nor poor
me?'

Dear Madame, you enjoy your age, 'tis
thought!

Your number Thirty-three on Quai Rous-
seau

Cost fifty times the price of Clairvaux, 50
tipped

Even with our prodigious Belvedere;

You entertain the Curé, — we, Dumas:

We play charades, while you prefer
bézique:

Do lead your own life and let ours alone!

Cross Old Year shall have done his worst,
my friend!

Here comes gay New Year with a gift, no
doubt.

Look up and let in light that longs to shine —
One flash of light, and where will darkness
hide?

Your cold makes me too cold, love! Keep
me warm!"

Whereat Léonce Miranda raised his head 60

From his two white thin hands, and forced
a smile,

And spoke: "I do look up, and see your
light

Above me! Let New Year contribute
warmth —

I shall refuse no fuel that may blaze."

Nor did he. Three days after, just a
spark

From Paris, answered by a snap at Caen
Or whither reached the telegraphic wire:

"Quickly to Paris! On arrival, learn
Why you are wanted!" Curt and critical!

Off starts Léonce, one fear from head to 70
foot;

Caen, Rouen, Paris, as the railway helps;
Then come the Quai and Number Thirty

three.

"What is the matter, concierge?" — a
grimace!

He mounts the staircase, makes for the main
seat

Of dreadful mystery which draws him
there —

Bursts in upon a bedroom known too
well —

There lies all left now of the mother once.
Tapers define the stretch of rigid white,

Nor want there ghastly velvets of the grave.
A blackness sits on either side at watch, 80

Sisters, good souls but frightful all the
same,

Silent: a priest is spokesman for his corpse—
“Dead through Léonce Miranda! stricken
down

Without a minute’s warning, yesterday!
What did she say to you, and you to her,
Two months ago? This is the consequence!

The doctors have their name for the disease;

I, you, and God say — heart-break, nothing more!”

Monsieur Léonce Miranda, like a stone

Fell at the bedfoot and found respite so,
10 While the priest went to tell the company.
What follows you are free to disbelieve.
It may be true or false that this good priest
Had taken his instructions, — who shall
blame? —

From quite another quarter than, perchance,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda might suppose
Would offer solace in such pressing need.
All he remembered of his kith and kin
Was they were worthily his substitutes
In commerce, did their work and drew
their pay.

20 But *they* remembered, in addition, this —
They fairly might expect inheritance,
As nearest kin, called Family by law
And gospel both. Now, since Miranda’s
life

Showed nothing like abatement of distaste
For conjugality, but preference
Continued and confirmed of that smooth
chain

Which slips and leaves no knot behind, no
heir . .

Presumption was, the man, become mature,
Would at a calculable day discard

30 His old and outworn . . . what we blush
to name,

And make society the just amends;
Scarce by a new attachment — Heaven
forbid!

Still less by lawful marriage: that’s reserved

For those who make a proper choice at
first —

Not try both courses and would grasp in
age

The very treasure youth preferred to spurn.
No! putting decently such thought aside,
The penitent must rather give his powers
To such a reparation of the past

40 As, edifying kindred, makes them rich.
Now, how would it enrich prospectively
The Cousins, if he lavished such expense
On Clairvaux? — pretty as a toy, but then
As toy, so much productive and no more!
If all the outcome of the goldsmith’s shop
Went to gild Clairvaux, where remain the
funds

For Cousinry to spread out lap and take?
This must be thought of and provided for.

I give it you as mere conjecture, mind!

To help explain the wholesome unannounced

Intelligence, the shock that startled guilt,
The scenic show, much yellow, black and
white

By taper-shine, the nuns — portentous
pair,

And, more than all, the priest’s admonishment —

“No flattery of self! You murdered her!

The grey lips, silent now, reprove by mine.

You wasted all your living, rioted

In harlotry — she warned and I repeat!

No warning had she, for she needed none:

If this should be the last yourself receive?” 60

Done for the best, no doubt, though
clumsily, —

Such, and so startling, the reception here,
You hardly wonder if down fell at once

The tawdry tent, pictorial, musical,

Poetical, besprent with hearts and darts;

Its cobweb-work, betinseled stitchery,

Lay dust about our sleeper on the turf,

And showed the outer towers distinct and
dread.

Senseless he fell, and long he lay, and much
Seemed salutary in his punishment 70

To planners and performers of the piece.
When pain ends, pardon prompt may

operate.

There was a good attendance close at hand,

Waiting the issue in the great saloon,

Cousins with consolation and advice.

All things thus happily performed to point,
No wonder at success commensurate.

Once swooning stopped, once anguish
subsequent

Raved out, — a sudden resolution chilled
His blood and changed his swimming eyes 80
to stone,

As the poor fellow raised himself upright,
Collected strength, looked, once for all, his
look,

Then, turning, put officious help aside
And passed from out the chamber. “For
affairs!”

So he announced himself to the saloon:

“We owe a duty to the living too!” —

Monsieur Léonce Miranda tried to smile.

How did the hearts of Cousinry rejoice

At their stray sheep returning thus to fold,

As, with a dignity, precision, sense, 90

All unsuspected in the man before,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda made minute

Detail of his intended scheme of life

Thenceforward and for ever. “Vanity

Was ended: its redemption must begin —

And, certain, would continue; but since
life

Was awfully uncertain — witness here! —

Behoved him lose no moment but discharge

Immediate burthen of the world's affairs
On backs that kindly volunteered to
crouch.

Cousins, with easier conscience, blame-
lessly

Might carry on the goldsmith's trade, in
brief,

Uninterfered with by its lord who late
Was used to supervise and take due tithe.
A stipend now sufficed his natural need:
Themselves should fix what sum allows
man live.

But half a dozen words concisely plain
10 Might, first of all, make sure that, on
demise,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda's property
Passed by bequeathment, every particle,
To the right heirs, the cousins of his heart.
As for that woman — they would under-
stand!

This was a step must take her by surprise.
It were too cruel did he snatch away
Decent subsistence. She was young, and
fair,

And . . . and attractive! Means must be
supplied

To save her from herself, and from the
world,

20 And . . . from anxieties might haunt him
else

When he were fain have other thoughts in
mind."

It was a sight to melt a stone, that thaw
Of rigid disapproval into dew
Of sympathy, as each extended palm
Of cousin hasted to enclose those five
Cold fingers, tendered so mistrustfully,
Despairingly of condonation now!
You would have thought, — at every fer-
vent shake,

In reassurance of those timid tips, —
30 The penitent had squeezed, considerate,
By way of fee into physician's hand
For physicking his soul, some diamond
knob.

And now let pass a week. Once more
behold

The same assemblage in the same saloon,
Waiting the entry of protagonist
Monsieur Léonce Miranda. "Just a week
Since the death-day, was ever man trans-
formed

Like this man?" questioned cousin of his
mate.

Last seal to the repentance had been set
40 Three days before, at Sceaux in neigh-
bourhood

Of Paris, where they laid with funeral pomp
Mother by father. Let me spare the rest:
How the poor fellow, in his misery,
Buried hot face and bosom, where heaped
snow

Offered assistance, at the grave's black edge,

And there lay, till uprooted by main force
From where he prayed to grow and ne'er
again

Walk earth unworthily as heretofore.

It is not with impunity priests teach

The doctrine he was dosed with from his 50
youth —

"Pain to the body — profit to the soul;
Corporeal pleasure — so much woe to pay
When disembodied spirit gives account."
However, woe had done its worst, this time.
Three days allow subsidence of much grief.
Already, regular and equable,
Forward went purpose to effect. At once
The testament was written, signed and
sealed.

Disposure of the commerce — that took
time,

And would not suffer by a week's delay; 60
But the immediate, the imperious need,
The call demanding of the Cousinry
Co-operation, what convened them thus,
Was — how and when should deputation
march

To Coliseum Street, the old abode
Of wickedness, and there acquaint — oh,
shame!

Her, its old inmate, who had followed up
And lay in wait in the old haunt for prey —
That they had rescued, they possessed
Léonce,

Whose loathing at recapture equalled 70
theirs —

Upbraid that sinner with her sinfulness,
Impart the fellow-sinner's firm resolve
Never to set eyes on her face again:
Then, after stipulations strict but just,
Hand her the first instalment, — moderate
Enough, no question, — of her salary:
Admonish for the future, and so end. —
All which good purposes, decided on
Sufficiently, were waiting full effect
When presently the culprit should appear. 80

Somehow appearance was delayed too long;
Chatting and chirping sunk inconspicuously
To silence, nay, uneasiness, at length
Alarm, till — anything for certitude! —
A peeper was commissioned to explore,
At keyhole, what the laggard's task might
be —

What caused so palpable a disrespect!

Back came the tiptoe cousin from his quest.
"Monsieur Léonce was busy," he believed,
"Contemplating, — those love-letters, per- 90
haps,

He always carried, as if precious stones,
About with him." He read, one after one,
Some sort of letters. But his back was
turned.

The empty coffer open at his side,
He leant on elbow by the mantelpiece
Before the hearth-fire; big and blazing too.

"Better he shovelled them all in at once,
And burned the rubbish!" was a cousin's
quip,
Warming his own hands at the fire the
while.
I told you, snow had fallen outside, I think.

When suddenly a cry, a host of cries,
Screams, hubbub and confusion thrilled
the room.
All by a common impulse rushed thence,
reached
The late death-chamber, tricked with
trappings still,
Skulls, cross-bones, and such moral broid-
ery.
70 Madame Muhlhausen might have played
the witch,
Dropped down the chimney and appalled
Léonce
Bysome proposal "Parting touch of hand!"
If she but touched his foolish hand, you
know!!

Something had happened quite contrari-
wise.
Monsieur Léonce Miranda, one by one,
Had read the letters and the love they held,
And, that task finished, had required his
soul
To answer frankly what the prospect
seemed
Of his own love's departure — pledged to
part!
20 Then, answer being unmistakable,
He had replaced the letters quietly,
Shut coffer, and so, grasping either side
By its convenient handle, plunged the
whole —
Letters and coffer and both hands to boot,
Into the burning grate and held them there.
"Burn, burn and purify my past!" said he,
Calmly, as if he felt no pain at all.

In vain they pulled him from the torture-
place:
The strong man, with the soul of tenfold
strength,
30 Broke from their clutch: and there again
smiled he,
The miserable hands re-bathed in fire —
Constant to that ejaculation "Burn,
Burn, purify!" And when, combining
force,
They fairly dragged the victim out of reach
Of further harm, he had no hands to hurt —
Two horrible remains of right and left,
"Whereof the bones, phalanges formerly,
Carbonised, were still crackling with the
flame,"
Said Beaumont. And he fought them all
the while:
40 "Why am I hindered when I would be
pure?"

Why leave the sacrifice still incomplete?
She holds me, I must have more hands to
burn!"
They were the stronger, though, and bound
him fast.

Beaumont was in attendance presently.
"What did I tell you? Preachment to the
deaf!
I wish he had been deafer when they
preached,
Those priests! But wait till next Repub-
lic comes!"

As for Léonce, a single sentiment
Possessed his soul and occupied his
tongue —
Absolute satisfaction at the deed. 54
Never he varied, 'tis observable,
Nor in the stage of agonies (which proved
Absent without leave, — science seemed
to think)
Nor yet in those three months' febricity
Which followed, — never did he vary
tale —
Remaining happy beyond utterance.
"Ineffable beatitude" — I quote
The words, I cannot give the smile —
"such bliss
Abolished pain! Pain might or might not
be:
He felt in heaven, where flesh desists to fret. 60
Purified now and henceforth, all the past
Reduced to ashes with the flesh defiled!
Why all those anxious faces round his bed?
What was to pity in their patient, pray,
When doctor came and went, and Cousins
watched?
— Kindness, but in pure waste!" he said
and smiled.
And if a trouble would at times disturb
The ambrosial mood, it came from other
source
Than the corporeal transitory pang.
"If sacrifice be incomplete!" cried he — 70
"If ashes have not sunk reduced to dust,
To nullity! If atoms coalesce
Till something grow, grow, grow to be a
shape
I hate, I hoped to burn away from me!
She is my body, she and I are one,
Yet, all the same, there, there at bed-foot
stands
The woman wound about my flesh and
blood,
There, the arms open, the more wonderful,
The whiter for the burning . . . Vanish
thou!
Avaunt, fiend's self found in the form I 80
wore!"

"Whereat," said Beaumont, "since his
hands were gone,
The patient in a frenzy kicked and licked

To keep off some imagined visitant.
So will it prove as long as priests may
preach

Spiritual terrors!" groaned the evidence
Of Beaumont that his patient was stark
mad —

Produced in time and place: of which
anon.

"Mad, or why thus insensible to pain?
Body and soul are one thing, with two
names

For more or less elaborated stuff."

Such is the new *Religio Medici*.

10 Though antiquated faith held otherwise,
Explained that body is not soul, but just
Soul's servant: that, if soul be satisfied,
Possess already joy or pain enough,
It uses to ignore, as master may,
What increase, joy or pain, its servant
brings —

Superfluous contribution: soul, once served,
Has nought to do with body's service more.
Each, speculated on exclusively,
As if its office were the only one,

20 Body or soul, either shows service paid
In joy and pain, that's blind and object-
less —

A servant's toiling for no master's good —
Or else shows good received and put to use,
As if within soul's self grew joy and pain,
Nor needed body for a ministrant.
I note these old unscientific ways:

Poor Beaumont cannot: for the Commune
ruled

Next year, and ere they shot his priests,
shot him.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda raved himself
30 To rest; lay three long months in bliss or
bale,

Inactive, anyhow: more need that heirs,
His natural protectors, should assume
The management, bestir their cousinship,
And carry out that purpose of reform
Such tragic work now made imperative.
A deputation, with austerity,
Nay, sternness, bore her sentence to the
fiend

Aforesaid, — she at watch for turn of wheel
And fortune's favour, Street — you know
the name.

40 A certain roughness seemed appropriate:
"You —

Steiner, Muhlhausen, whatsoe'er your
name,
Cause whole and sole of this catastro-
phe!" —

And so forth, introduced the embassy.

"Monsieur Léonce Miranda was divorced
Once and for ever from his — ugly word.
Himself had gone for good to Portugal:
They came empowered to act and stipulate."

Hold! no discussion! Terms were settled
now:

So much of present and prospective pay,
But also — good engagement in plain terms 50
She never seek renewal of the past!"

This little harmless tale produced effect.
Madame Muhlhausen owned her sentence
just,

Its execution gentle. "Stern their phrase,
These kinsfolk with a right she recog-
nised —

But kind its import probably, which now
Her agitation, her bewilderment
Rendered too hard to understand, perhaps.
Let them accord the natural delay,
And she would ponder and decide. Mean- 60
time,

So far was she from wish to follow friend
Who fled her, that she would not budge
from place —

Now that her friend was fled to Portugal, —
Never! *She* leave this Coliseum Street?
No, not a footstep!" she assured them.

So —
They saw they might have left that tale
untold

When, after some weeks more were gone
to waste,

Recovery seemed incontestable,
And the poor mutilated figure, once
The gay and glancing fortunate young 70
spark,

Miranda, humbled and obedient took
The doctor's counsel, issued sad and slow
From precincts of the sick-room, tottered
down,

And out, and into carriage for fresh air,
And so drove straight to Coliseum Street,
And tottered upstairs, knocked, and in a
trice

Was clasped in the embrace of whom you
know —

With much asseveration, I omit,
Of constancy henceforth till life should
end.

When all this happened, — "What re- 80
ward," cried she,

"For judging her Miranda by herself!
For never having entertained a thought
Of breaking promise, leaving home for-
sooth,

To follow who was fled to Portugal!
As if she thought they spoke a word of
truth!

She knew what love was, knew that he
loved her;

The Cousinry knew nothing of the kind."

I will not scandalise you and recount
How matters made the morning pass away.
Not one reproach, not one acknowledg- 90
ment,

One explanation: all was understood!
Matters at end, the home-uneasiness
Cousins were feeling at this jaunt prolonged
Was ended also by the entry of —
Not simply him whose exit had been made
By mild command of doctor "Out with
you!

I warrant we receive another man!"
But — would that I could say, the married
pair!

And, quite another man assuredly,
10 Monsieur Léonce Miranda took on him
Forthwith to bid the trio, priest' and
nuns,

Constant in their attendance all this while,
Take his thanks and their own departure
too;

Politely but emphatically. Next,
The Cousins were dismissed: "No pro-
test, pray!

Whatever I engaged to do is done,
Or shall be — I but follow your advice:
Love I abjure: the lady, you behold,
Is changed as I myself; her sex is changed:

20 This is my Brother — He will tend me
now,
Be all my world henceforth as brother
should.

Gentlemen, of a kinship I revere,
Your interest in trade is laudable:
I purpose to indulge it: manage mine,
My goldsmith-business in the Place Ven-
dôme,

Wholly — through purchase at the price
adjudged

By experts I shall have assistance from.
If, in conformity with sage advice,
I leave a busy world of interests

30 I own myself unfit for — yours the care
That any world of other aims, wherein
I hope to dwell, be easy of access
Through ministration of the moneys due,
As we determine, with all proper speed,
Since I leave Paris to repair my health.
Say farewell to our Cousins, Brother
mine!"

And, all submissiveness, as brother might,
The lady curtsied gracefully, and dropt
More than mere curtesy, a concluding
phrase

40 So silver-soft, yet penetrative too,
That none of it escaped the favoured ears:
"Had I but credited one syllable,
I should to-day be lying stretched on
straw,

The produce of your miserable *rente*!
Whereas, I hold him — do you compre-
hend?"

Cousin regarded cousin, turned up eye,
And took departure, as our Tuscans laugh,
Each with his added palm-breadth of long
nose, —

Curtailed but imperceptibly, next week,

When transfer was accomplished, and the 59
trade

In Paris did indeed become their own,
But bought by them and sold by him on
terms

'Twixt man and man, — might serve
'twixt wolf and wolf,
Substitute "bit and clawed" for "signed
and sealed" —

Our ordinary business-terms, in short.
Another week, and Clairvaux broke in
bloom

At end of April, to receive again
Monsieur Léonce Miranda, gentleman,
Ex-jeweller and goldsmith: never more, —
According to the purpose he professed, — 64
To quit this paradise, his property,
This Clara, his companion: so it proved.

The Cousins, each with elongated nose,
Discussed their bargain, reconciled them
soon

To hard necessity, disbursed the cash,
And hastened to subjoin, wherever type
Proclaimed "Miranda" to the public,
"Called

Now Firm-Miranda." There, a colony,
They flourish underneath the name that
still

Maintains the old repute, I understand. 70
They built their Clairvaux, dream-Château
in Spain,

Perhaps — but Place Vendôme is waking
worth:

Oh, they lost little! — only, man and man
Hardly conclude transactions of the kind
As cousin should with cousin, — cousins
think.

For the rest, all was honourably done,
So, ere buds break to blossom, let us
breathe!

Never suppose there was one particle
Of recrudescence — wound, half-healed
before,

Set freshly running — sin, repressed as such, 80
New loosened as necessity of life!
In all this revocation and resolve,
Far be sin's self-indulgence from your
thought!

The man had simply made discovery,
By process I respect if not admire,
That what was, was: — that turf, his feet
had touched,

Felt solid just as much as yonder towers
He saw with eyes, but did not stand upon,
And could not, if he would, reach in a leap.
People had told him flowery turf was false 94
To footstep, tired the traveller soon, beside:
That was untrue. They told him "One
fair stride

Plants on safe platform and secures man
rest."

That was untrue. Some varied the ad-
vice:

"Neither was solid, towers no more than turf."

Double assertion, therefore twice as false.

"I like these amateurs" — our friend had laughed,

Could he turn what he felt to what he thought,

And, that again, to what he put in words:

"I like their pretty trial, proof of paste

Or precious stone, by delicate approach

Of eye askance, fine feel of finger-tip,

Or touch of tongue inquisitive for cold.

10 I tried my jewels in a crucible:

Fierce fire has felt them, licked them, left them sound.

Don't tell me that my earthly love is sham,

My heavenly fear a clever counterfeit!

Each may oppose each, yet be true alike!"

To build up, independent of the towers,

A durable pavilion o'er the turf,

Had issued in disaster. "What remained

Except, by tunnel, or else gallery,

To keep communication 'twixt the two,

30 Unite the opposites, both near and far,

And never try complete abandonment

Of one or other?" so he thought, not said.

And to such engineering feat, I say,

Monsieur Léonce Miranda saw the means

Precisely in this revocation prompt

Of just those benefits of worldly wealth

Conferred upon his Cousinry — all but!

This Clairvaux — you would know, were

you at top

Of yonder crowning grace, its Belvedere —

30 Is situate in one angle-niche of three

At equidistance from Saint-Rambert —

there

Behind you, and the Ravissante, beside

There: steeple, steeple, and this Clairvaux-

top,

(A sort of steeple) constitute a trine,

With not a tenement to break each side,

Two miles or so in length, if eye can judge.

Now, this is native land of miracle.

O why, why, why, from all recorded time,

Was miracle not wrought once, only once,

40 To help whoever wanted help indeed?

If on the day when Spring's green girlishness

Grew nubile and she trembled into May,

And our Miranda climbed to clasp the

Spring

A-tiptoe o'er the sea, those wafts of

warmth,

Those cloudlets scudding under the bare

blue,

And all that new sun, that fresh hope about

His airy place of observation, — friend,

Feel with me that if just then, just for once,

Some angel, — such as the authentic pen

50 Yonder records a daily visitant

Of ploughman Claude, rheumatic in the

joints,

And spinster Jeanne, with megrim troubled sore,

If such an angel, with nought else to do,

Had taken station on the pinnacle

And simply said "Léonce, look straight before!

Neither to right hand nor to left: for why?

Being a stupid soul, you want a guide

To turn the goodness in you to account

And make stupidity submit itself.

Go to Saint-Rambert! Straightway get 64 such guide!

There stands a man of men. You, jeweller,

Must needs have heard how once the biggest block

Of diamond now in Europe lay exposed

Mid specimens of stone and earth and ore,

On huckster's stall, — Navona names the Square,

And Rome the city for the incident, —

Labelled 'quartz-crystal, price one half-penny.'

Haste and secure that ha'p'worth, on your life!

That man will read you rightly head to foot,

Mark the brown face of you, the bushy 70 beard,

The breadth 'twixt shoulder-blades, and through each black

Castilian orbit, see into your soul.

Talk to him for five minutes — nonsense, sense,

No matter what — describe your horse, your hound, —

Give your opinion of the policy

Of Monsieur Rouher, — will he succour Rome?

Your estimate of what may outcome be

From Ecumenical Assemblage there!

After which samples of intelligence,

Rapidly run through those events you call 80

Your past life, tell what once you tried to do,

What you intend on doing this next May!

There he stands, reads an English newspaper,

Stock-still, and now, again upon the move,

Paces the beach to taste the Spring, like you,

Since both are human beings in God's eye.

He will have understood you, I engage.

Endeavour, for your part, to understand

He knows more, and loves better, than the world

That never heard his name, and never may. 90

He will have recognised, ere breath be spent

And speech at end, how much that's good in man,

And generous, and self-devoting, makes Monsieur Léonce Miranda worth his help;

While sounding to the bottom ignorance

Historical and philosophical
 And moral and religious, all one couch
 Of crassitude, a portent of its kind.
 Then, just as he would pityingly teach
 Your body to repair maltreatment, give
 Advice that you should make those stumps
 to stir
 With artificial hands of caoutchouc,
 So would he soon supply your crippled soul
 With crutches, from his own intelligence,
 10 Able to help you onward in the path
 Of rectitude whereto your face is set,
 And counsel justice — to yourself, the first,
 To your associate, very like a wife
 Or something better, — to the world at
 large,
 Friends, strangers, horses, hounds and
 Cousinry —
 All which amount of justice will include
 Justice to God. Go and consult his
 voice!"

Since angel would not say this simple truth,
 What hinders that my heart relieve itself,
 20 Milsand, who makest warm my wintry
 world,
 And wise my heaven, if there we consort
 too?

Monsieur Léonce Miranda turned, alas,
 Or was turned, by no angel, t'other way,
 And got him guidance of The Ravissante.

Now, into the originals of faith,
 Yours, mine, Miranda's, no inquiry here!
 Of faith, as apprehended by mankind,
 The causes, were they caught and cata-
 logued,
 Would too distract, too desperately foil
 30 Inquirer. How may analyst reduce
 Quantities to exact their opposites,
 Value to zero, then bring zero back
 To value of supreme preponderance?
 How substitute thing meant for thing ex-
 pressed?
 Detect the wire-thread through that fluffy
 silk
 Men call their rope, their real compulsive
 power?
 Suppose detected such anatomy,
 And demonstration made of what belief
 Has moved believer — were the conse-
 quence

40 Reward at all? would each man straight
 deduce,
 From proved reality of cause, effect
 Conformable — believe and unbelieve
 According to your True thus disengaged
 From all his heap of False called reason
 first?

No: hand once used to hold a soft thick
 twist,
 Cannot now grope its way by wire alone:
 Childhood may catch the knack, scarce
 Youth, not Age!

That's the reply rewards you. Just as
 well
 Remonstrate to yon peasant in the blouse
 That, had he justified the true intent
 54 Of Nature who composed him thus and
 thus,
 Weakly or strongly, here he would not
 stand
 Struggling with uncongenial earth and sky,
 But elsewhere tread the surface of the
 globe,
 Since one meridian suits the faulty lungs,
 Another bids the sluggish liver work.
 "Here I was born, for better or for worse:
 I'd not choose a climate for myself;
 Admit, my life were healthy, led else-
 where,"
 (He answers) "how am I to migrate, 60
 pray?"

Therefore the course to take is — spare
 your pains,
 And trouble uselessly with discontent
 Nor soul nor body, by parading proof
 That neither haply had known ailment,
 placed
 Precisely where the circumstance forbade
 Their lot should fall to either of the pair.
 But try and, what you find wrong, remedy,
 Accepting the conditions: never ask
 "How came you to be born here with those
 lungs,
 That liver?" But bid asthma smoke a 70
 pipe,
 Stramonium, just as if no Tropics were,
 And ply with calomel the sluggish duct,
 Nor taunt "The born Norwegian breeds
 no bile!"

And as with body, so proceed with soul:
 Nor less discerningly, where faith you
 found,
 However foolish and fantastic, grudge
 To play the doctor and amend mistake,
 Because a wisdom were conceivable
 Whence faith had sprung robust above
 disease.
 Far beyond human help, that source of 80
 things!

Since, in the first stage, so to speak, —
 first stare
 Of apprehension at the invisible, —
 Begins divergency of mind from mind,
 Superior from inferior: leave this first!
 Little you change there! What comes
 afterward —
 From apprehended thing, each inference
 With practicality concerning life,
 This you may test and try, confirm the
 right
 Or contravene the wrong which reasons
 there.

The offspring of the sickly faith must prove 90
 Sickly act also: stop a monster-birth!
 When water's in the cup and not the cloud,

Then is the proper time for chemic test:
Belief permits your skill to operate
When, drop by drop condensed from misty
heaven,

'Tis wrung out, lies a bowlful in the fleece.
How dew by spoonfuls came, let Gideon
say:

What purpose water serves, your word or
two

May teach him, should he fancy it lights
fire.

Concerning, then, our vaporous Ravis-
sante —

How fable first precipitated faith —

10 Silence you get upon such point from me.
But when I see come posting to the pair
At Clairvaux, for the cure of soul-disease,
This Father of the Mission, Parish-priest,
This Mother of the Convent, Nun I know —
They practise in that second stage of
things;

They boast no fresh distillery of faith;
'Tis dogma in the bottle, bright and old,
They bring; and I pretend to pharmacy.
They undertake the cure with all my
heart!

20 He trusts them, and they surely trust them-
selves.

I ask no better. Never mind the cause,
Fons et origo of the malady:
Apply the drug with courage! Here's our
case.

Monsieur Léonce Miranda asks of God,
— May a man, living in illicit tie,
Continue, by connivance of the Church,
No matter what amends he please to make
Short of forthwith relinquishing the sin?
Physicians, what do you propose for cure?

30 Father and Mother of the Ravissante,
Read your own records, and you find pre-
scribed

As follows, when a couple out of sorts
Rather than gravely suffering, sought your
skill

And thereby got their health again.
Perpend!

Two and a half good centuries ago,
Luc de la Maison Rouge, a nobleman
Of Claise, (the river gives this country
name)

And, just as noblewoman, Maude his wife,
Having been married many happy years

10 Spent in God's honour and man's service
too,

Conceived, while yet in flower of youth and
hope,

The project of departing each from each
For ever, and dissolving marriage-bonds
That both might enter a religious life.

Needing, before they came to such resolve,
Divine illumination, — course was clear, —
They visited your church in pilgrimage,

On Christmas morn: communicating
straight,

They heard three Masses proper for the
day,

"It is incredible with what effect" — 50

Quoth the Cistercian monk I copy from —
And, next day, came, again communi-
cants,

Again heard Masses manifold, but now
With added thanks to Christ for special
grace

And consolation granted: in the night.
Had been divorce from marriage, manifest
By signs and tokens. So, they made great
gifts,

Left money for more Masses, and returned
Homeward rejoicing — he, to take the
rules,

As Brother Dionysius, Capucin; 60

She, to become first postulant, then nun
According to the rules of Benedict,
Sister Scolastica: ¹ so ended they,

And so do I — not end nor yet commence
One note or comment. What was done
was done.

Now, Father of the Mission, here's your
case!

And, Mother of the Convent, here's its
cure!

If separation was permissible,
And that decree of Christ "What God
hath joined

Let no man put asunder" nullified 70

Because a couple, blameless in the world,
Had the conceit that, still more blame-
lessly,

Out of the world, by breach of marriage-
vow,

Their life was like to pass, — you oracles
Of God, — since holy Paul says such you
are, —

Hesitate, not one moment, to pronounce
When questioned by the pair now needing
help

"Each from the other go, you guilty ones,
Preliminary to your least approach

Nearer the Power that thus could strain a 80
point

In favour of a pair of innocents
Who thought their wedded hands not clean
enough

To touch and leave unsullied their souls'
snow!

Are not your hands found filthy by the
world,

Mere human law and custom? Not a
step

Nearer till hands be washed and puri-
fied!"

What they did say is immaterial, since
Certainly it was nothing of the kind.

There was no washing hands of him (alack,

¹ Sister of St. Benedict.

You take me? — in the figurative sense!),
 But, somehow, gloves were drawn o'er
 dirt and all,
 And practice with the Church procured
 thereby.
 Seeing that, — all remonstrance proved in
 vain,
 Persuasives tried and terrors put to use,
 I nowise question, — still the guilty pair
 Only embraced the closelier, obstinate, —
 Father and Mother went from Clairvaux
 back
 Their weary way, with heaviness of heart,
 I grant you, but each palm well crossed
 with coin,
 And nothing like a smutch perceptible.
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda might com-
 pound
 For sin? — no, surely! but by gifts —
 prepare
 His soul the better for contrition, say!
 Gift followed upon gift, at all events.
 Good counsel was rejected, on one part:
 Hard money, on the other — may we hope
 Was unreflectingly consigned to purse?

Two years did this experiment engage
 20 Monsieur Léonce Miranda: how, by gifts
 To God and to God's poor, a man might
 stay
 In sin and yet stave off sin's punishment.
 No salve could be conceived more nicely
 mixed
 For this man's nature: generosity, —
 Susceptibility to human ills,
 Corporeal, mental, — self-devotedness
 Made up Miranda — whether strong or
 weak
 Elsewhere, may be inquired another time.
 In mercy he was strong, at all events.
 30 Enough! he could not see a beast in pain,
 Much less a man. without the will to aid;
 And where the will was, oft the means were
 too,
 Since that good bargain with the Cousinry.

The news flew fast about the countryside
 That, with the kind man, it was ask and
 have;
 And ask and have they did. To instance
 you: —
 A mob of beggars at The Ravissante
 Clung to his skirts one day, and cried
 "We thirst!"
 Forthwith he bade a cask of wine be
 broached
 40 To satisfy all comers, till, dead-drunk
 So satisfied, they strewed the holy place.
 For this was grown religious and a rite:
 Such slips of judgment, gifts irregular,
 Showed but as spillings of the golden grist
 On either side the hopper, through blind
 zeal;
 Steadily the main stream went pouring on

From mill to mouth of sack — held wide
 and close
 By Father of the Mission, Parish-priest,
 And Mother of the Convent, Nun I know,
 With such effect that, in the sequel, proof 50
 Was tendered to the Court at Vire, last
 month,
 That in these same two years, expenditure
 At quiet Clairvaux rose to the amount
 Of Forty Thousand English Pounds:
 whereof
 A trifle went, no inappropriate close
 Of bounty, to supply the Virgin's crown
 With that stupendous jewel from New-
 York,
 Now blazing as befits the Star of Sea.

Such signs of grace, outward and visible,
 I rather give you, for your sake and 60
 mine,
 Than put in evidence the inward strife,
 Spiritual effort to compound for fault
 By payment of devotion — thank the
 phrase!
 That payment was as punctual, do not
 doubt,
 As its far easier fellow. Yesterday
 I trudged the distance from The Ravis-
 sante
 To Clairvaux, with my two feet: but our
 friend,
 The more to edify the country-folk,
 Was wont to make that journey on both
 knees.
 "Maliciously perverted incident!" 70
 Snarled the retort, when this was told at
 Vire:
 "The man paid mere devotion as he
 passed,
 Knelt decently at just each wayside
 shrine!"
 Alas, my lawyer, I trudged yesterday —
 On my two feet, and with both eyes wide
 ope, —
 The distance, and could find no shrine at
 all!
 According to his lights, I praise the man.
 Enough! incessant was devotion, say —
 With her, you know of, praying at his side. 80
 Still, there be relaxations of the tense;
 Or life indemnifies itself for strain,
 Or finds its very strain grow feebleness.
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda's days were
 passed
 Much as of old, in simple work and play.
 His first endeavour, on recovery
 From that sad ineffectual sacrifice,
 Had been to set about repairing loss:
 Never admitting, loss was to repair.
 No word at any time escaped his lips
 — Betrayed a lurking presence, in his 90
 heart,
 Of sorrow; no regret for mischief done —
 Punishment suffered, he would rather say.

Good-tempered schoolboy-fashion, he preferred
To laugh away his flogging, fair price paid
For pleasure out of bounds: if needs must
Get pleasure and get flogged a second time!
A sullen subject would have nursed the scars
And made excuse, for throwing grammar by,
That bench was grown uneasy to the seat.
No: this poor fellow cheerfully got hands
Fit for his stumps, and what hands failed
to do,
The other members did in their degree —
Unwonted service. With his mouth alone
He wrote, nay, painted pictures — think
of that!
He played on a piano pedal-keyed,
Kicked out — if it was Bach's — good
music thence.
He rode, that's readily conceivable,
But then he shot and never missed his bird,
With other feats as dexterous: I infer
He was not ignorant what hands are worth,
When he resolved on ruining his own.
So the two years passed somehow — who
shall say
Foolishly, — as one estimates mankind,
The work they do, the play they leave
undone? —
Two whole years spent in that experiment
I told you of, at Clairvaux all the time,
From April on to April: why that month
More than another, notable in life?
Does the awakening of the year arouse
Man to new projects, nerve him for fresh
feats
Of what proves, for the most part of man-
kind
Playing or working, novel folly too?
At any rate, I see no slightest sign
Of folly (let me tell you in advance),
Nothing but wisdom meets me manifest
In the procedure of the Twentieth Day
Of April 'Seventy, — folly's year in
France.
It was delightful Spring, and out of doors
Temptation to adventure. Walk or ride?
There was a wild young horse to exercise,
And teach the way to go and pace to keep:
Monsieur Léonce Miranda chose to ride.
So, while they clapped soft saddle straight
on back,
And bitted jaw to satisfaction, — since
The partner of his days must stay at
home,
Teased by some trifling legacy of March
To throat or shoulder, — visit duly paid
And "farewell" given and received
again, —
As chamber-door considerably closed

Behind him, still five minutes were to
spend.
How better, than by clearing, two and
two,
The staircase-steps and coming out aloft
Upon the platform yonder (raise your
eyes!)
And tasting, just as those two years before,
Spring's bright advance upon the tower
atop,
The feature of the front, the Belvedere?
Look at it for a moment while I breathe.

IV.

Ready to hear the rest? How good you
are!
Now for this Twentieth splendid day of
Spring,
All in a tale, — sun, wind, sky, earth and
sea, —
To bid man "Up, be doing!" Mount the
stair,
Monsieur Léonce Miranda mounts so
brisk,
And look — ere his elastic foot arrive —
Your longest, far and wide, o'er fronting
space.
Yon white streak — Havre lighthouse!
Name and name,
How the mind runs from each to each
relay,
Town after town, till Paris' self be
touched,
Superlatively big with life and death
To all the world, that very day perhaps!
He who stepped out upon the platform
here,
Pinnacled over the expanse, gave thought
Neither to Rouher nor Ollivier, Roon
Nor Bismarck, Emperor nor King, but just
To steeple, church, and shrine, The Ravis-
sante!
He saw Her, whom myself saw, but when
Spring
Was passing into Fall: not robed and
crowned
As, thanks to him, and her you know
about,
She stands at present; but She smiled the
same.
Thither he turned — to never turn away.
He thought . . .
(Suppose I should prefer "He said?"
Along with every act — and speech is
act —
There go, a multitude impalpable
To ordinary human faculty,
The thoughts which give the act signifi-
cance.

Who is a poet needs must apprehend
 Alike both speech and thoughts which
 prompt to speak.
 Part these, and thought withdraws to
 poetry:
 Speech is reported in the newspaper.)

He said, then, probably no word at all,
 But thought as follows — in a minute's
 space —
 One particle of ore beats out such leaf!

"This Spring-morn I am forty-three years
 old:

In prime of life, perfection of estate
 10 Bodily, mental, nay, material too, —
 My whole of worldly fortunes reach their
 height.

Body and soul alike on eminence:
 It is not probable I ever raise
 Soul above standard by increase of worth,
 Nor reasonably may expect to lift
 Body beyond the present altitude.

"Behold me, Lady called The Ravissante!
 Such as I am, I — gave myself to you
 So long since, that I cannot say 'I give.'
 20 All my belongings, what is summed in
 life,

I have submitted wholly — as man might,
 At least, as I might, who am weak, not
 strong, —

Wholly, then, to your rule and governance,
 So far as I had strength. My weakness
 was —

I felt a fascination, at each point
 And pore of me, a Power as absolute
 Claiming that soul should recognise her
 sway.

O you were no whit clearer Queen, I see,
 Throughout the life that rolls out ribbon-
 like

30 Its shot-silk length behind me, than the
 strange

Mystery — how shall I denominate
 The unrobed One? Robed you go and
 crowned as well,

Named by the nations: she is hard to
 name,
 Though you have spelt out certain char-
 acters

Obscure upon what fillet binds her brow,
Lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, life's pride.
 'So call her, and condemn the enchant-
 ress!' — 'Crush

The despot, and recover liberty!' —
 Cried despot and enchantress at each ear.
 40 You were conspicuous and pre-eminent,
 Authoritative and imperial, — you
 Spoke first, claimed homage: did I hesi-
 tate?

Born for no mastery, but servitude,
 Men cannot serve two masters, says the
 Book;

Master should measure strength with
 master, then,
 Before on servant is imposed a task.
 You spoke first, promised best, and
 threatened most;
 The other never threatened, promised,
 spoke

A single word, but, when your part was
 done,

Lifted a finger, and I, prostrate, knew 50
 Films were about me, though you stood
 aloof

Smiling or frowning 'Where is power like
 mine

To punish or reward thee? Rise, thou
 fool!

Will to be free, and, lo, I lift thee loose!
 Did I not will, and could I rise a whit?
 Lay I, at any time, content to lie?

'To lie, at all events, brings pleasure:
 make

Amends by undemanded pain!' I said.
 Did not you prompt me? 'Purchase now
 by pain

Pleasure hereafter in the world to come!' 60
 I could not pluck my heart out, as you
 bade

Unbidden, I burned off my hands at least.
 My soul retained its treasure; but my
 purse

Lightened itself with much alacrity.
 Well, where is the reward? what promised
 fruit

Of sacrifice in peace, content? what sense
 Of added strength to bear or to forbear?

What influx of new light assists me now
 Even to guess you recognise a gain
 In what was loss enough to mortal me? 70

But she, the less authoritative voice,
 Oh, how distinct enunciating, how
 Plain dealing! Gain she gave was gain
 indeed!

That, you deny: that, you contemptuous
 call

Acorns, swine's food not man's meat!
 'Spurn the draft!'

Ay, but those life-tree apples I prefer,
 Am I to die of hunger till they drop?

Husks keep flesh from starvation, anyhow.
 Give those life-apples! — one, worth
 woods of oak,

Worth acorns by the waggon-load, — one 80
 shoot

Through heart and brain, assurance bright
 and brief

That you, my Lady, my own Ravissante,
 Feel, through my famine, served and satis-
 fied,

Own me, your starveling, soldier of a
 sort!

Your soldier! do I read my title clear
 Even to call myself your friend, not foe?
 What is the pact between us but a truce?
 At best I shall have staved off enmity,

- Obtained a respite, ransomed me from wrath.
 I pay, instalment by instalment, life,
 Earth's tribute-money, pleasures great and small,
 Whereof should at the last one penny piece
 Fall short, the whole heap becomes forfeiture.
 You find in me deficient soldiership:
 Want the whole life or none. I grudge that whole,
 Because I am not sure of recompense:
 Because I want faith. Whose the fault? I ask.
- 10 If insufficient faith have done thus much,
 Contributed thus much of sacrifice,
 More would move mountains, you are warrant. Well,
 Grant, you, the grace, I give the gratitude!
 And what were easier? 'Ask and have' folk call
 Miranda's method: 'Have, nor need to ask!'
 So do they formulate your quality
 Superlative beyond my human grace.
 The Ravissante, you ravish men away
 From puny aches and petty pains, assuaged
- 20 By man's own art with small expenditure
 Of pill or potion, unless, put to shame,
 Nature is roused and sets things right herself.
 Your miracles are grown our commonplace;
 No day but pilgrim hobbles his last mile,
 Kneels down and rises up, flings crutch away,
 Or else appends it to the reverend heap
 Beneath you, votive cripple-carpentry.
 Some few meet failure — oh, they wanted faith,
 And may betake themselves to La Salette,
- 30 Or seek Lourdes, so that hence the scandal limp!
 The many get their grace and go their way
 Rejoicing, with a tale to tell, — most like,
 A staff to borrow, since the crutch is gone,
 Should the first telling happen at my house,
 And teller wet his whistle with my wine.
 I tell this to a doctor and he laughs:
 'Give me permission to cry — Out of bed,
 You loth rheumatic sluggard! Cheat yon chair
 Of laziness, its gouty occupant! —
- 40 You should see miracles performed.
 But now,
 I give advice, and take as fee ten francs,
 And do as much as does your Ravissante.
 Send her that case of cancer to be cured
 I have refused to treat for any fee,
 Bring back my would-be patient sound and whole,
- And see me laugh on t'other side my mouth!'
 Can he be right, and are you hampered thus?
 Such pettiness restricts a miracle
 Wrought by the Great Physician, who hears prayer,
 Visibly seated in your mother-lap! 50
 He, out of nothing, made sky, earth, and sea,
 And all that in them is — man, beast, bird, fish,
 Down to this insect on my parapet.
 Look how the marvel of a minim crawls!
 Were I to kneel among the halt and maimed,
 And pray 'Who mad'st the insect with ten legs,
 Make me one finger grow where ten were once!'
 The very priests would thrust me out of church.
 'What folly does the madman dare expect?
 No faith obtains — in this late age, at 60
 least —
 Such cure as that! We ease rheumatics, though!'
- "Ay, bring the early ages back again,
 What prodigy were unattainable?
 I read your annals. Here came Louis Onze,
 Gave thrice the sum he ever gave before
 At one time, some three hundred crowns, to wit —
 On pilgrimage to pray for — health, he found?
 Did he? I do not read it in Commynes.¹
 Here sent poor joyous Marie-Antoinette
 To thank you that a Dauphin dignified 70
 Her motherhood — called Duke of Normandy
 And Martyr of the Temple, much the same
 As if no robe of hers had dressed you rich;
 No silver lamps, she gave, illumine your shrine!
 Here, following example, fifty years
 Ago, in gratitude for birth again
 Of yet another destined King of France,
 Did not the Duchess fashion with her hands,
 And frame in gold and crystal, and present
 A bouquet made of artificial flowers? 80
 And was he King of France, and is not he
 Still Count of Chambord?
- "Such the days of faith,
 And such their produce to encourage mine!
 What now, if I too count without my host?
 I too have given money, ornament,

¹ Philippe de Commynes, the famous chronicler (1445-1509).

And 'artificial flowers' — which, when I
plucked,
Seemed rooting at my heart and real
enough:
What if I gain thereby nor health of mind,
Nor youth renewed which perished in its
prime,
Burnt to a cinder 'twixt the red-hot bars,
Nor gain to see my second baby-hope
Of managing to live on terms with both
Opposing potentates, the Power and you,
Crowned with success? I dawdle out my
days
10 In exile here at Clairvaux, with mock love,
That gives — while whispering 'Would I
dared refuse!' —
What the loud voice declares my heart's
free gift:
Mock worship, mock superiority
O'er those I style the world's benighted
ones,
That irreligious sort I pity so,
Dumas and even Hertford who is Duke.

"Impiety? Not if I know myself!
Not if you know the heart and soul I bare,
I bid you cut, hack, slash, anatomise,
20 Till peccant part be found and flung away!
Demonstrate where I need more faith!
Describe
What act shall evidence sufficiency
Of faith, your warrant for such exercise
Of power, in my behalf, as all the world
Except poor praying me declares profuse?
Poor me? It is that world, not me alone,
That world which prates of fixed laws and
the like,
I fain would save, poor world so ignorant!
And your part were — what easy miracle?
30 Oh, Lady, could I make your want like
mine!"

Then his face grew one luminescy.

"Simple, sufficient! Happiness at height!
I solve the riddle, I persuade mankind.
I have been just the simpleton who
stands —
Summoned to claim his patrimonial
rights —
At shilly-shally, may he knock or no
At his own door in his own house and
home
Whereof he holds the very title-deeds!
Here is my title to this property,
40 This power you hold for profit of myself
And all the world at need — which need is
now!

"My title — let me hear who controverts!
Count Mailleville built yon church. Why
did he so?
Because he found your image. How
came that?

His shepherd told him that a certain sheep
Was wont to scratch with hoof and scrape
with horn
At ground where once the Danes had razed
a church.
Thither he went, and there he dug, and
thence
He disinterred the image he conveyed
In pomp to Londres yonder, his domain. 50
You liked the old place better than the
new.
The Count might surely have divined as
much:
He did not; someone might have spoke a
word:
No one did. A mere dream had warned
enough
That back again in pomp you best were
borne:
No dream warned, and no need of convoy
was;
An angel caught you up and clapped you
down —
No mighty task, you stand one *metre* high,
And people carry you about at times.
Why, then, did you despise the simple 60
course?
Because you are the Queen of Angels:
when
You front us in a picture, there flock they,
Angels around you, here and everywhere.

"Therefore, to prove indubitable faith,
Those angels that acknowledge you their
queen,
I summon them to bear me to your feet
From Clairvaux through the air, an easy
trip!
Faith without flaw! I trust your po-
tency,
Benevolence, your will to save the world —
By such a simplest of procedures, too! 70
Not even by affording angel-help,
Unless it please you: there's a simpler
mode:
Only suspend the law of gravity,
And, while at back, permitted to propel,
The air helps onward, let the air in front
Cease to oppose my passage through the
midst!

"Thus I bestride the railing, leg o'er leg,
Thus, lo, I stand, a single inch away,
At dizzy edge of death's, — no touch of
fear,
As safe on tower above as turf below! 80
Your smile enswathes me in beatitude,
You lift along the votary — who vaults,
Who, in the twinkling of an eye, revives,
Dropt safely in the space before the
church —
How crowded, since this morn is market-
day!
I shall not need to speak. The news will run

Like wild-fire. 'Thousands saw Miranda's flight!' 'Tis telegraphed to Paris in a trice. The Boulevard is one buzz 'Do you believe?' Well, this time, thousands saw Miranda's flight: You know him, goldsmith in the Place Vendôme.' In goes the Empress to the Emperor: 'Now — will you hesitate to make disgorge Your wicked King of Italy his gains, Give the Legations to the Pope, once more?' Which done, — why, grace goes back to operate, They themselves set a good example first, Resign the empire twenty years usurped, And Henry, the Desired One, reigns o'er France! Regenerated France makes all things new! My house no longer stands on Quai Rousseau But Quai rechristened Alacoque: ¹ a quai Where Renan burns his book, and Veuillot ² burns Renan beside, since Veuillot rules the roast, Re-edits now indeed 'The Universe.'³ O blessing, O superlatively big With blessedness beyond all blessing dreamed By man! for just that promise has effect, 'Old things shall pass away and all be new!' Then, for a culminating mercy-feat, Wherefore should I dare dream impossible That I too have my portion in the change? My past with all its sorrow, sin and shame, Becomes a blank, a nothing! There she stands, Clara de Millefleurs, all deodorised, Twenty years' stain wiped off her innocence! There never was Muhlhausen, nor at all Duke Hertford: nought that was, remains, except The beauty, — yes, the beauty is unchanged! Well, and the soul too, that must keep the same! And so the trembling little virgin hand Melts into mine, that's back again, of course! — Think not I care about my poor old self! I only want my hand for that one use,

¹ Margaret Mary Alacoque, foundress of a religious order, *d.* 1690.

² An Ultramontane writer.

³ M. Veuillot's paper.

To take her hand, and say 'I marry you — Men, women, angels, you behold my wife! ⁴ There is no secret, nothing wicked here, Nothing she does not wish the world to know!' None of your married women have the right To mutter 'Yes, indeed, she beats us all In beauty, — but our lives are pure at least!' Bear witness, for our marriage is no thing Done in a corner! 'Tis The Ravissante Repairs the wrong of Paris. See, She smiles, She beckons, She bids 'Hither, both of you!' And may we kneel? And will you bless ⁵ us both? And may I worship you, and yet love her? Then!' —

A sublime spring from the balustrade About the tower so often talked about, A flash in middle air, and stone-dead lay Monsieur Léonce Miranda on the turf.

A gardener who watched, at work the while Dribbling a flower-bed for geranium-shoots, Saw the catastrophe, and, straightening back, Stood up and shook his brows. "Poor soul, poor soul! Just what I prophesied the end would be! ⁶ Ugh — the Red Night-cap!" (as he raised the head) "This must be what he meant by those strange words While I was weeding larkspurs yesterday, 'Angels would take him!' Mad!"

No! sane, I say. Such being the conditions of his life, Such end of life was not irrational. Hold a belief, you only half-believe, With all-momentous issues either way, — And I advise you imitate this leap, Put faith to proof, be cured or killed at ⁷ once! Call you men, killed through cutting cancer out, The worse for such an act of bravery? That's more than I know. In my estimate, Better lie prostrate on his turf at peace, Than, wistful, I, from out the tent, the tower, Racked with a doubt "Will going on bare knees All the way to The Ravissante and back, Saying my Ave Mary all the time, Somewhat excuse if I postpone my march? — Make due amends for that one kiss I ⁸ gave In gratitude to her who held me out

Superior Fricquot's sermon, hot from
press,
A-spread with hands so sinful yet so
smooth?"

And now, sincerely do I pray she stand,
Clara, with interposing sweep of robe,
Between us and this horror! Any screen
Turns white by contrast with the tragic
pall;

And her dubiety distracts at least,
As well as snow, from such decided black.
With womanhood, at least, we have to do:
10 Ending with Clara — is the word too kind?

Let pass the shock! There's poignancy
enough

When what one parted with, a minute
since,

Alive and happy, is returned a wreck —
All that was, all that seemed about to be,
Razed out and ruined now for evermore,
Because a straw descended on this scale
Rather than that, made death o'erbalance
life.

But think of cage-mates in captivity,
Inured to day long, night-long vigilance
20 Each of the other's tread and angry turn
If behind prison-bars the jailer knocked:
These whom society shut out, and thus
Penned in, to settle down and regulate
By the strange law, the solitary life —
When death divorces such a fellowship,
Theirs may pair off with that prodigious
woe

Imagined of a ghastly brotherhood —
One watcher left in lighthouse out at sea
With leagues of surf between the land and
him

30 Alive with his dead partner on the rock;
One galley-slave, whom curse and blow
compel

To labour on, ply oar — beside his chain,
Encumbered with a corpse-companion
now.

Such these: although, no prisoners, self-
entrenched

They kept the world off from their bar-
ricade.

Memory, gratitude was poignant, sure,
Though pride brought consolation of a
kind.

Twenty years long had Clara been — of
whom

The rival, nay, the victor, past dispute?

40 What if in turn The Ravissante at length
Proved victor — which was doubtful —
anyhow,

Here lay the inconstant with, conspicuous
too,

The fruit of his good fortune!

"Has he gained
By leaving me?" she might soliloquize:

'All love could do, I did for him. I
learned
By heart his nature, what he loved and
loathed,
Leaned to with liking, turned from with
distaste.

No matter what his least velleity,
I was determined he should want no wish,
And in conformity administered
To his requirement; most of joy I mixed
5 With least of sorrow in life's daily draught,
Twenty years long, life's proper average.
And when he got to quarrel with my cup,
Would needs outsweeten honey, and dis-
card

That gall-drop we require lest nectar
cloy, —

I did not call him fool, and vex my friend,
But quietly allowed experiment,
Encouraged him to spice his drink, and
now

Grate *lignum vitæ*,¹ now bruise so-called 60
grains

Of Paradise,² and pour now, for perfume,
Distilment rare, the rose of Jericho,
Holy-thorn, passion-flower, and what
know I?

Till beverage obtained the fancied smack.
'Twas wild-flower-wine that neither helped
nor harmed

Who sipped and held it for restorative —
What harm? But here has he been
through the hedge

Straying in search of simples, while my
back

Was turned a minute, and he finds a prize,
Monkshood and belladonna! O my 70
child,

My truant little boy, despite the beard,
The body two feet broad and six feet long,
And what the calendar counts middle
age —

You wanted, did you, to enjoy a flight?

Why not have taken into confidence

Me, that was mother to you? — never
mind

What mock disguise of mistress held you
mine!

Had you come laughing, crying, with re-
quest,

'Make me fly, mother!' I had run up-
stairs

And held you tight the while I danced you 80
high

In air from tower-top, singing 'Off we go
(On pilgrimage to Lourdes some day next
month)

And swift we soar (to Rome with Peter-
pence)

And low we light (at Paris where we pick
Another jewel from our store of stones

* Guaiacum wood, good for rheumatism.

• Name for an aromatic drug.

And send it for a present to the Pope)!
 So, dropt indeed you were, but on my knees,
 Rolling and crowing, not a whit the worse
 For journey to your Ravissante and back.
 Now, no more Clairvaux — which I made you build,
 And think an inspiration of your own —
 No more fine house, trim garden, pretty park,
 Nothing I used to busy you about,
 And make believe you worked for my surprise!
 What weariness to me will work become
 Now that I need not seem surprised again!
 This boudoir, for example, with the doves
 (My stupid maid has damaged, dusting one)
 Embossed in stucco o'er the looking-glass
 Beside the toilet-table! dear — dear me!"
 Here she looked up from her absorbing grief,
 And round her, crow-like grouped, the Cousinry,
 (She grew aware) sat witnesses at watch.
 For, two days had elapsed since fate befell
 The courser in the meadow, stretched so stark.
 They did not cluster on the tree-tops, close
 Their sooty ranks, caw and confabulate
 For nothing: but, like calm determined crows,
 They came to take possession of their corpse.
 And who shall blame them? Had not they the right?
 One spoke. "They would be gentle, not austere.
 They understood and were compassionate.
 Madame Muhlhausen lay too abject now
 For aught but the sincerest pity; still,
 Since plain speech salves the wound it seems to make,
 They must speak plainly — circumstances spoke!
 Sin had conceived and brought forth death indeed.
 As the commencement so the close of things:
 Just what might be expected all along!
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda launched his youth
 Into a cesspool of debauchery,
 And if he thence emerged all dripping slime,
 Where was the change except from thin to thick,
 One warm rich mud-bath, Madame? — you, in place
 Of Paris-drainage and distilment, you
 He never needed budge from, boiled to rags!

True, some good instinct left the natural man,
 Some touch of that deep dye wherewith imbued
 By education, in his happier day,
 The hopeful offspring of high parentage
 Was fleece-marked moral and religious sheep, —
 Some ruddle, faint remainder, (we admit)
 Stuck to Miranda, rubbed he ne'er so rude
 Against the goatly coarseness: to the last,
 Moral he styled himself, religious too!
 Which means — what ineradicable good
 You found, you never left till good's self proved
 Perversion and distortion, nursed to growth
 So monstrous, that the tree-stock, dead and dry,
 Were seemlier far than such a heap grotesque
 Of fungous flourishing excrescence. Here
 Sap-like affection, meant for family,
 Stole off to feed one sucker fat — yourself;
 While branchage, trained religiously aloft
 To rear its head in reverence to the sun,
 Was pulled down earthward, pegged and picketed,
 By topiary contrivance, till the tree
 Became an arbour where, at vulgar ease,
 Sat superstition grinning through the loops.
 Still, nature is too strong or else too weak
 For cockney treatment: either, tree springs back
 To pristine shape, or else degraded droops,
 And turns to touchwood at the heart. So here —
 Body and mind, at last the man gave way.
 His body — there it lies, what part was left
 Unmutilated! for, the strife commenced
 Two years ago, when both hands burnt to ash,
 — A branch broke loose, by loss of what choice twigs!
 As for his mind — behold our register
 Of all its moods, from the incipient mad,
 Nay, mere erratic, to the stark insane,
 Absolute idiocy or what is worse!
 All have we catalogued — extravagance
 In worldly matters, luxury absurd,
 And zeal as crazed in its expenditure
 Of nonsense called devotion. Don't we know
 — We Cousins, bound in duty to our kin, —
 What mummeries were practised by you two
 At Clairvaux? Not a servant got discharge
 But came and told his grievance, testified

To acts which turn religion to a farce.
And as the private mock, so patent —
see —

The public scandal! Ask the neighbour-
nood —

Or rather, since we asked them long ago,
Read what they answer, depositions down,
Signed, sealed and sworn to! Brief, the
man was mad.

We are his heirs and claim our heritage.
Madame Muhlhausen, — whom good
taste forbids

We qualify as do these documents, —
10 Fear not lest justice stifle mercy's prayer!
True, had you lent a willing ear at first,
Had you obeyed our call two years ago,
Restrained a certain insolence of eye,
A volubility of tongue, that time,
Your prospects had been none the worse,
perhaps.

Still, fear not but a decent competence
Shall smooth the way for your declining
age!

What we propose, then . . ."

Clara dried her eyes,
Sat up, surveyed the consistory, spoke

20 After due pause, with something of a
smile.

"Gentlemen, kinsfolk of my friend de-
funct,

In thus addressing me — of all the
world! —

You much misapprehend what part I play.
I claim no property you speak about.

You might as well address the park-
keeper,

Harangue him on some plan advisable
For covering the park with cottage-plots.

He is the servant, no proprietor,
His business is to see the sward kept trim,

30 Untrespassed over by the indiscreet:
Beyond that, he refers you to myself —
Another servant of another kind —

Who again — quite as limited in act —
Refer you, with your projects, — can I
else?

To who in mastery is ultimate,
The Church. The Church is sole ad-
ministrant,

Since sole possessor of what worldly
wealth

Monsieur Léonce Miranda late possessed.
Often enough has he attempted, nay,

40 Forced me, well-nigh, to occupy the post
You seemingly suppose I fill, — receive
As gift the wealth entrusted me as grace.
This — for quite other reasons than ap-
pear

So cogent to your perspicacity —
This I refused; and, firm as you could
wish,

Still was my answer 'We two understand

Each one the other. I am intimate
— As how can be mere fools and knaves —
or, say,

Even your Cousins? — with your love to
me,

Devotion to the Church. Would Provi-
dence

Appoint, and make me certain of the same,
That I survive you (which is little like,

Seeing you hardly overpass my age
And more than match me in abundant
health)

In such case, certainly I would accept
Your bounty: better I than alien hearts
Should execute your planned benevolence
To man, your proposed largess to the
Church.

But though I be survivor, — weakly
frame,

With only woman's wit to make amends, — 6a

When I shall die, or while I am alive,
Cannot you figure me an easy mark

For hypocritical rapacity,
Kith, kin and generation, couching low,

Ever on the alert to pounce on prey?
Far be it I should say they profited

By that first frenzy-fit themselves in-
duced, —

Cold-blooded scenical buffoons at sport
With horror and damnation o'er a grave:

That were too shocking — I absolve them 7a
there!

Nor did they seize the moment of your
swoon

To rifle pocket, wring a paper thence,
Their Cousinly dictation, and enrich

Thereby each mother's son as heart could
wish,

Had nobody supplied a codicil.
But when the pain, poor friend! had pros-
trated

Your body, though your soul was right
once more,

I fear they turned your weakness to ac-
count!

Why else to me, who agonising watched,
Sneak, cap in hand, now bribe me to for- 8a
sake

My maimed Léonce, now bully, cap on
head,

The impudent pretension to assuage
Such sorrows as demanded Cousins'

care? —

For you rejected, hated, fled me, far
In foreign lands you laughed at me! —

they judged.

And, think you, will the unkind ones hesi-
tate

To try conclusions with my helplessness, —
To pounce on and misuse your derelict,

Helped by advantage that bereavement
lends

Folk, who, while yet you lived, played 9a
tricks like these?

You only have to die, and they detect,
 In all you said and did, insanity!
 Your faith was fetish-worship, your re-
 gard
 For Christ's prime precept which endows
 the poor
 And strips the rich, a craze from first to
 last!
 They so would limn your likeness, paint
 your life,
 That if it ended by some accident, —
 For instance, if, attempting to arrange
 The plants below that dangerous Belve-
 dère
 I cannot warn you from sufficiently,
 You last your balance and fell headlong —
 fine
 Occasion, such, for crying *Suicide!*
Non compos mentis, naturally next,
 Hands over Clairvaux to a Cousin-tribe
 Who nor like me nor love The Ravis-
 sante:
 Therefore be ruled by both! Life-in-
 terest
 In Clairvaux, — conservation, guardian-
 ship
 Of earthly good for heavenly purpose, —
 give
 Such and no other proof of confidence!
 Let Clara represent the Ravissante!
 — To whom accordingly, he then and
 there
 Bequeathed each stick and stone, by testa-
 ment
 In holograph, mouth managing the quill:
 Go, see the same in Londres, if you
 doubt!"
 Then smile grew laugh, as sudden up she
 stood
 And out she spoke: intemperate the
 speech!
 "And now, sirs, for your special courtesy,
 Your candle held up to the character
 Of Lucie Steiner, whom you qualify
 As coming short of perfect womanhood.
 Yes, kindly critics, truth for once you
 tell!
 True is it that through childhood, poverty,
 Sloth, pressure of temptation, I suc-
 cumbed,
 And, ere I found what honour meant, lost
 mine.
 So was the sheep lost, which the Shepherd
 found
 And never lost again. My friend found
 me;
 Or better say, the Shepherd found us
 both —
 Since he, my friend, was much in the same
 mire
 When first we made acquaintance. Each
 helped each, —
 A two-fold extrication from the slough;

And, saving me, he saved himself. Since
 then,
 Unsmirched we kept our cleanliness of
 coat.
 It is his perfect constancy, you call
 My friend's main fault — he never left his
 love!
 While as for me, I dare your worst, impute
 One breach of loving bond, these twenty
 years,
 To me whom only cobwebs bound, you
 count!
 'He was religiously disposed in youth!'
 That may be, though we did not meet at
 church.
 Under my teaching did he, like you 50
 scamps,
 Become Voltairian — fools who mock his
 faith?
 'Infirm of body!' I am silent there:
 Even yourselves acknowledge service done,
 Whatever motive your own souls supply
 As inspiration. Love made labour light."
 Then laugh grew frown, and frown grew
 terrible.
 Do recollect what sort of person shrieked —
 "Such was I, saint or sinner, what you
 please:
 And who is it casts stone at me but you?
 By your own showing, sirs, you bought and 60
 sold,
 Took what advantage bargain promised
 bag,
 Abundantly did business, and with
 whom?
 The man whom you pronounce imbecile,
 push
 Indignantly aside if he presume
 To settle his affairs like other folk!
 How is it you have stepped into his shoes
 And stand there, bold as brass, 'Miranda,
 late,
 Now, Firm-Miranda'? Sane, he signed
 away
 That little birthright, did he? Hence to
 trade!
 I know and he knew who 'twas dipped and 70
 ducked,
 Truckled and played the parasite in vain,
 As now one, now the other, here you
 cringed,
 Were feasted, took our presents, you —
 those drops
 Just for your wife's adornment! you —
 that spray
 Exactly suiting, as most diamonds would,
 Your daughter on her marriage! No
 word then
 Of somebody the wanton! Hence, I say,
 Subscribers to the *Sicde*, every snob —
 For here the post brings me the *Univers*!
 Home and make money in the Place 80
 Vendôme,

Sully yourselves no longer by my sight,
 And, when next Schneider wants a new
parure,
 Be careful lest you stick there by mis-
 chance
 That stone beyond compare entrusted
 you
 To kindle faith with, when, Miranda's
 gift,
 Crowning the very crown, the Ravissante
 Shall claim it! As to Clairvaux — talk
 to Her!
 She answers by the Chapter of Raim-
 baux!"

Vituperative, truly! All this wrath
 Because the man's relations thought him
 mad!
 Whereat, I hope you see the Cousinry
 Turn each to other, blankly dolorous,
 Consult a moment, more by shrug and
 shrug
 Than mere man's language, — finally
 conclude
 To leave the reprobate untroubled now
 In her unholy triumph, till the Law
 Shall right the injured ones; for gentle-
 men
 Allow the female sex, this sort at least,
 Its privilege. So, simply "Cockatrice!" —
 "Jezebel!" — "Queen of the Camel-
 lias!" — cried
 Cousin to cousin, as yon hinge a-creak
 Shut out the party, and the gate returned
 To custody of Clairvaux. "Pretty place!
 What say you, when it proves our property,
 To trying a concurrence with La Roche,
 And laying down a rival oyster-bed?
 Where the park ends, the sea begins, you
 know."
 So took they comfort till they came to Vire.

But I would linger, fain to snatch a
 look
 At Clara as she stands in pride of place,
 Somewhat more satisfying than my glance
 So furtive, so near futile, yesterday,
 Because one must be courteous. Of the
 masks
 That figure in this little history,
 She only has a claim to my respect,
 And one-eyed, in her French phrase, rules
 the blind.

Miranda hardly did his best with life:
 He might have opened eye, exerted brain,
 Attained conception as to right and law
 In certain points respecting intercourse
 Of man with woman — love, one likes to
 say;
 Which knowledge had dealt rudely with the
 claim
 Of Clara to play representative
 And from perdition rescue soul, for-
 sooth!
 Also, the sense of him should have sufficed

For building up some better theory
 Of how God operates in heaven and
 earth,
 Than would establish Him participant
 In doings yonder at the Ravissante.
 The heart was wise according to its 50
 lights
 And limits; but the head refused more
 sun,
 And shrank into its mew and craved less
 space.

Clara, I hold the happier specimen, —
 It may be, through that artist-preference
 For work complete, inferiorly proposed,
 To incompletion, though it aim aright.
 Morally, no! Aspire, break bounds! I
 say,
 Endeavour to be good, and better still,
 And best! Success is nought, endeav-
 our's all.

But intellect adjusts the means to ends, 60
 Tries the low thing, and leaves it done, at
 least;
 No prejudice to high thing, intellect
 Would do and will do, only give the
 means.

Miranda, in my picture-gallery,
 Presents a Blake; be Clara — Meissonier!
 Merely considered so by artist, mind!
 For, break through Art and rise to poetry,
 Being Art to tremble nearer, touch enough
 The verge of vastness to inform our
 soul
 What orb makes transit through the dark 70
 above,
 And there's the triumph! — there the in-
 complete,
 More than completion, matches the im-
 mense, —

Then, Michelagnolo against the world!
 With this proviso, let me study her
 Approvingly, the finished little piece!
 Born, bred, with just one instinct, — that
 of growth, —
 Her quality was, caterpillar-like,
 To all-unerringly select a leaf
 And without intermission feed her fill,
 Become the Painted-peacock, or belike 80
 The Brimstone-wing, when time of year
 should suit;
 And 'tis a sign (say entomologists)
 Of sickness, when the creature stops its
 meal
 One minute, either to look up at heaven,
 Or turn aside for change of aliment.
 No doubt there was a certain ugliness
 In the beginning, as the grub grew
 worm:
 She could not find the proper plant at
 once,
 But crawled and fumbled through a whole
 parterre.

Husband Muhlhhausen served for stuff not 90
 long:

Then came confusion of the slimy track
 From London, "where she gave the tone
 awhile,"
 To Paris: let the stalks start up again,
 Now she is off them, all the greener
 they!
 But, settled on Miranda, how she sucked,
 Assimilated juices, took the tint,
 Mimicked the form and texture of her
 food!
 Was he for pastime? Who so frolic-
 fond
 As Clara? Had he a devotion-fit?
 Clara grew serious with like qualm, be
 sure!
 In health and strength he, — healthy too
 and strong,
 She danced, rode, drove, took pistol-
 practice, fished,
 Nay, "managed sea-skiff with consum-
 mate skill."
 In pain and weakness, he, — she patient
 watched
 And wiled the slow drip-dropping hours
 away.
 She bound again the broken self-respect,
 She picked out the true meaning from mis-
 take,
 Praised effort in each stumble, laughed
 "Well-climbed!"
 When others groaned "None ever grovelled
 so!"
 "Rise, you have gained experience!" was
 her word:
 "Lie satisfied, the ground is just your
 place!"
 They thought appropriate counsel. "Live,
 not die,
 And take my full life to eke out your
 own:
 That shall repay me and with interest!
 Write! — is your mouth not clever as my
 hand?
 Paint! — the last Exposition warrants
 me,
 Plenty of people must ply brush with
 toes.
 And as for music — look, what folk nick-
 name
 A lyre, those ancients played to ravish-
 ment, —
 Over the *pendule*, see, Apollo grasps
 A three-stringed gimcrack which no Liszt
 could coax
 Such music from as jew's-harp makes to-
 day!
 Do your endeavour like a man, and leave
 The rest to 'fortune who assists the bold' —
 Learn, you, the Latin which you taught
 me first,
 You clever creature — clever, yes, I say!"
 If he smiled "Let us love, love's wrong
 comes right,

Shows reason last of all! Necessity
 Must meanwhile serve for plea — so,
 mind not much
 Old Fricquot's menace!" — back she 40
 smiled "Who minds?"
 If he sighed "Ah, but She is strict, they
 say,
 For all Her mercy at the Ravissante,
 She scarce will be put off so!" — straight
 a sigh
 Returned "My lace must go to trim Her
 gown!"
 I nowise doubt she inwardly believed
 Smiling and sighing had the same effect
 Upon the venerated image. What
 She did believe in, I as little doubt,
 Was — Clara's self's own birthright to
 sustain
 Existence, grow from grub to butterfly, 50
 Upon unlimited Miranda-leaf;
 In which prime article of faith confirmed,
 According to capacity, she fed
 On and on till the leaf was eaten up
 That April morning. Even then, I praise
 Her forethought which prevented leafless
 stalk
 Bestowing any hearted succulence
 On earwig and blackbeetle squat beneath
 Clairvaux, that stalk whereto her hermitage
 She tacked by golden throw of silk, so 60
 fine,
 So anything but feeble, that her sleep
 Inside it, through last winter, two years
 long,
 Recked little of the storm and strife with-
 out.
 "But — loved him?" Friend, I do not
 praise her love!
 True love works never for the loved one
 so,
 Nor spares skin-surface, smoothening truth
 away.
 Love bids touch truth, endure truth, and
 embrace
 Truth, though, embracing truth, love
 crush itself.
 "Worship not me but God!" the angels
 urge:
 That is love's grandeur: still, in pettier 70
 love
 The nice eye can distinguish grade and
 grade.
 Shall mine degrade the velvet green and
 puce
 Of caterpillar, palmer-worm — or what —
 Ball in and out of ball, each ball with
 brush
 Of Venus' eye-fringe round the turquoise
 egg
 That nestles soft, — compare such paragon
 With any scarabæus of the brood
 Which, born to fly, keeps wing in wing-
 case, walks
 Persistently a-trundling dung on earth?

Egypt may venerate such hierophants,
 Not I — the couple yonder, Father Priest
 And Mother Nun, who came and went and
 came,
 Beset this Clairvaux, trundled money-
 muck
 To midden and the main heap oft enough,
 But never bade unshut from sheath the
 gauze,
 Nor showed that, who would fly, must let
 fall filth,
 And warn "Your jewel, brother, is a blotch :
 Sister, your lace trails ordure ! Leave
 your sins,
 10 And so best gift with Crown and grace
 with Robe !"

The superstition is extinct, you hope ?
 It were, with my good will ! Suppose it so,
 Bethink you likewise of the latest use
 Whereto a Night-cap is convertible,
 And draw your very thickest, thread and
 thrum,
 O'er such a decomposing face of things,
 Once so alive, it seemed immortal too !

This happened two years since. The
 Cousinry
 Returned to Paris, called in help from
 Law,
 20 And in due form proceeded to dispute
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda's competence,
 Being insane, to make a valid Will.

Much testimony volunteered itself ;
 The issue hardly could be doubtful — but
 For that sad 'Seventy which must inter-
 vene,
 Provide poor France with other work to
 mind
 Than settling lawsuits, even for the sake
 Of such a party as the Ravissante.
 It only was this Summer that the case
 30 Could come and be disposed of, two weeks
 since,
 At Vire — Tribunal Civil — Chamber
 First.

Here, issued with all regularity,
 I hold the judgment — just, inevitable,
 Nowise to be contested by what few
 Can judge the judges ; sum and substance,
 thus —

"Inasmuch as we find, the Cousinry,
 During that very period when they take
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda for stark
 mad,
 Considered him to be quite sane enough
 40 For doing much important business with —
 Nor showed suspicion of his competence
 Until, by turning of the tables, loss
 Instead of gain accrued to them thereby, —
 Plea of incompetence we set aside.

— "The rather, that the dispositions,
 sought
 To be impugned, are natural and right,
 Nor jar with any reasonable claim
 Of kindred, friendship or acquaintance
 here.
 Nobody is despoiled, none overlooked ;
 Since the testator leaves his property 50
 To just that person whom, of all the
 world,
 He counted he was most indebted to.
 In mere discharge, then, of conspicuous
 debt,
 Madame Muhlhausen has priority,
 Enjoys the usufruct of Clairvaux.

"Next,
 Such debt discharged, such life determin-
 ing,
 Such earthly interest provided for,
 Monsieur Léonce Miranda may bequeath,
 In absence of more fit recipient, fund
 And usufruct together to the Church 60
 Whereof he was a special devotee.

"— Which disposition, being consonant
 With a long series of such acts and deeds
 Notorious in his life-time, needs must
 stand,
 Unprejudiced by eccentricity
 Nowise amounting to distemper: since,
 In every instance signalised as such,
 We recognise no overleaping bounds,
 No straying out of the permissible:
 Duty to the Religion of the Land, — 70
 Neither excessive nor inordinate.

"The minor accusations are dismissed ;
 They prove mere freak and fancy, boyish
 mood
 In age mature of simple kindly man.
 Exuberant in generousities
 To all the world: no fact confirms the
 fear
 He meditated mischief to himself
 That morning when he met the accident
 Which ended fatally. The case is closed."

How otherwise? So, when I grazed the 80
 skirts,
 And had the glimpse of who made,
 yesterday, —
 Woman and retinue of goats and sheep, —
 The sombre path one whiteness, vision-like,
 As out of gate, and in at gate again,
 They wavered, — she was lady there for
 life:
 And, after life — I hope, a white success
 Of some sort, wheresoever life resume
 School interrupted by vacation — death;
 Seeing that home she goes with prize in
 hand,
 Confirmed the Châtelaine of Clairvaux. 90

True,
 Such prize fades soon to insignificance.
 Though she have eaten her Miranda up,
 And spun a cradle-cone through which
 she pricks
 Her passage, and proves Peacock-butter-
 fly
 This Autumn — wait a little week of cold?
 Peacock and death's-head-moth end much
 the same,
 And could she still continue spinning, —
 sure,
 Cradle would soon crave shroud for sub-
 stitute,
 And o'er this life of hers distaste would
 drop
 Red-cotton-Night-cap-wise.

 How say you, friend?
 Have I redeemed my promise? Smile
 assent
 Through the dark Winter-gloom between
 us both!

Already, months ago and miles away,
 I just as good as told you, in a flash,
 The while we paced the sands before my
 house,
 All this poor story — truth and nothing
 else.
 Accept that moment's flashing, amplified,
 Impalpability reduced to speech,
 Conception proved by birth, — no other so
 change!
 Can what Saint-Rambert flashed me in a
 thought,
 Good gloomy London make a poem of?
 Such ought to be whatever dares precede,
 Play ruddy herald-star to your white blaze
 About to bring us day. How fail imbibe
 Some fortaste of effulgence? Sun shall
 wax,
 And star shall wane: what matter, so star
 tell
 The drowsy world to start awake, rub
 eyes,
 And stand all ready for morn's joy a-blush?

January 23, 1873.

THE INN ALBUM.

1875.

[For the alleged foundation of this story, see *Notes and Queries*, March 25, 1876.]

THE INN ALBUM.

I.

"THAT oblong book's the Album; hand it here!
Exactly! page on page of gratitude
For breakfast, dinner, supper, and the view!
I praise these poets: they leave margin-space;
Each stanza seems to gather skirts around,
And primly, trimly, keep the foot's confine,
Modest and maidlike; lubber prose o'er-sprawls
And straddling stops the path from left to right.
Since I want space to do my cipher-work,
o Which poem spares a corner? What comes first?
'Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!'
(Open the window, we burn daylight, boy!)
Or see — succincter beauty, brief and bold —
'If a fellow can dine On rumpsteaks and port wine,
He needs not despair Of dining well here —'
'Here!' I myself could find a better rhyme!
That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form:
But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense!
Still, I prefer this classic. Ay, throw wide!
20 I'll quench the bits of candle yet unburnt.
A minute's fresh air, then to cipher-work!
Three little columns hold the whole account:
Écarté, after which Blind Hookey, then
Cutting-the-Pack, five hundred pounds the cut.
'Tis easy reckoning: I have lost, I think."

Two personages occupy this room
Shabby-genteel, that's parlour to the inn
Perched on a view-commanding eminence;
— Inn which may be a veritable house
30 Where somebody once lived and pleased good taste
Till tourists found his coign of vantage out,
And fingered blunt the individual mark

And vulgarised things comfortably smooth.
On a sprig-pattern-papered wall there brays
Complaint to sky Sir Edwin's dripping stag;
His couchant coast-guard creature corresponds;
They face the Huguenot and Light'o' the World.
Grim o'er the mirror on the mantelpiece,
Varnished and confined, *Salmo jerox* glares
— Possibly at the List of Wines which, 40
framed
And glazed, hangs somewhat prominent on peg.

So much describes the stuffy little room —
Vulgar flat smooth respectability:
Not so the burst of landscape surging in,
Sunrise and all, as he who of the pair
Is, plain enough, the younger personage
Draws sharp the shrieking curtain, sends aloft
The sash, spreads wide and fastens back to wall
Shutter and shutter, shows you England's best.
He leans into a living glory-bath 50
Of air and light where seems to float and move
The wooded watered country, hill and dale
And steel-bright thread of stream, a-smoke with mist,
A-sparkle with May morning, diamond drift
O' the sun-touched dew. Except the red-roofed patch
Of half a dozen dwellings that, crept close
For hill-side shelter, make the village-clump,
This inn is perched above to dominate —
Except such sign of human neighbourhood,
(And this surmised rather than sensible) 60
There's nothing to disturb absolute peace,
The reign of English nature — which means art
And civilised existence. Wildness' self
Is just the cultured triumph. Presently
Deep solitude, be sure, reveals a Place
That knows the right way to defend itself:
Silence hems round a burning spot of life.

- Till death us twain do part? The bargain's struck!
 Old fellow, if you fancy — (to begin —)
 I failed to penetrate your scheme last week,
 You wrong your poor disciple. Oh, no
 airs!
- Because you happen to be twice my age
 And twenty times my master, must per-
 force
 No blink of daylight struggle through the
 web
 There's no unwinding? You entoil my
 legs,
 And welcome, for I like it: blind me, —
 no!
- 10 A very pretty piece of shuttle-work
 Was that — your mere chance question at
 the club —
*'Do you go anywhere this Whitsuntide?
 I'm off for Paris, there's the Opera —
 there's*
*The Salon, there's a china-sale, — beside
 Chantilly; and, for good companionship,
 There's Such-and-such and So-and-so.*
Suppose
We start together?' 'No such holiday!'
*I told you: 'Paris and the rest be hanged!
 Why plague me who am pledged to home-
 delights?'*
- I'm the engaged now; through whose fault
 but yours?
 On duty. As you well know. Don't I
 drowse
 The week away down with the Aunt and
 Niece?
 No help: it's leisure, loneliness and love.
 Wish I could take you; but fame travels
 fast,' —
*A man of much newspaper-paragraph,
 You scare domestic circles; and beside
 Would not you like your lot, that second
 taste
 Of nature and approval of the grounds!
 You might wail early or lie late, so shirk*
- 30 Week-day devotions: but stay Sunday o'er
 And morning church is obligatory:
 No mundane garb permissible, or dread
 The butler's privileged monition! No!
 Pack off to Paris, nor wipe tear away!
 Whoe'er how artlessly the happy flash
 Followed, by inspiration! *'Tell you
 what —*
*Let's turn their flank, try things on t'other
 side!*
*Inns for my money! Liberty's the life!
 We'll lie in hiding: there's the crow-nest
 nook,*
- The tourist's joy, the Inn they rave about,
 Inn that's out — out of sight and out of
 mind
 And out of mischief to all four of us —
 Aunt and niece, you and me. At night
 arrive;
 At morn, find time for just a Pisgah-view
- Of my friend's Land of Promise; then
 depart.*
*And while I'm whizzing onward by first
 train,
 Bound for our own place (since my Brother
 sulks
 And says I shun him like the plague) your-
 self —*
*Why, you have stepped thence, start from
 platform, gay
 Despite the sleepless journey, — love lends* 50
wings, —
*Hug aunt and niece who, none the wiser,
 wait
 The faithful advent! Eh?' 'With all my
 heart,'*
*Said I to you; said I to mine own self:
 'Does he believe I fail to comprehend
 He wants just one more final friendly
 snuck
 At friend's exchequer ere friend runs to
 earth,
 Marries, renounces yielding friends such
 sport?'*
*And did I spoil sport, pull face grim, —
 nay, grave?
 Your pupil does you better credit! No!
 I parleyed with my pass-book, — rubbed* 60
my pair
*At the big balance in my banker's hands, —
 Folded a cheque cigar-case-shape, — just
 wants
 Filling and signing, — and took train,
 resolved
 To execute myself with decency
 And let you win — if not Ten thousand
 quite,
 Something by way of wind-up-farewell
 burst
 Of firework-nosegay! Where's your for-
 tune fled?
 Or is not fortune constant after all?
 You lose ten thousand pounds: had I lost
 half
 Or half that, I should bite my lips, I* 70
think.
*You man of marble! Strut and stretch my
 best
 On tiptoe, I shall never reach your height.
 How does the loss feel! Just one lesson
 more!"*
- The more refined man smiles a frown away.
 "The lesson shall be — only boys like you
 Put such a question at the present stage.
 I had a ball lodge in my shoulder once,
 And, full five minutes, never guessed the
 fact;
 Next day, I felt decidedly: and still,
 At twelve years' distance, when I lift my
- 80
-
- arm
-
- A twinge reminds me of the surgeon's
-
- probe.

Ask me, this day monthly, how I feel my
luck!

And meantime please to stop impertinence.
For — what I know the subject? All too
chaff.

Covers the town, this profane leads to
speech.

This day stands with a hero. 'There, my
boy!

Our play has been played, but not earnest! I
Empty, your game, inside out, while my
side.

Strip, it's for you! You can feel, more
I say, more and more, more and more —
I am I might down I in the day, change
drop

And show my father's warehouse-apron:
achance!

Stranger! I am here, my boy, my boy,
over morning, — about, and about, my
friend!

My mother's name, would! I feel her man
my man.

There, say! He don't say it! Thanks,
my boy!

Here, say! He don't say it! Thanks,
my boy!

Enough!
We've played, I've lost and owe ten thou-

sand pounds.

Where's a woman, at the moment. — well,
What's the best way, now, to the back of
town?

Silly! I've got to go, now, to the back of
town. You may say it your money at woman's
end.

The young man at the window turns round
quick —

A young man, now, my boy, my boy, my boy,
he has the best way, now, to the back of
town.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

I've learned to know a little — all the day,
you!

It's nature I feel you. That's why
As I feel you, feeling the best way —
For sure I am, the best way, feeling the
best way, feeling the best way, feeling the
best way.

My mother's name, would! I feel her man
my man.

There, say! He don't say it! Thanks,
my boy!

Here, say! He don't say it! Thanks,
my boy!

Enough!
We've played, I've lost and owe ten thou-

sand pounds.

Where's a woman, at the moment. — well,
What's the best way, now, to the back of
town?

Silly! I've got to go, now, to the back of
town. You may say it your money at woman's
end.

The young man at the window turns round
quick —

A young man, now, my boy, my boy, my boy,
he has the best way, now, to the back of
town.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

Of the other, back, him in the sorrow face.

*Commission-agent hight of Manchester —
Partly, and partly through a baby case
Of disappointment I've pumped out at
last —*

*And here you spend life's prime in gaining
flesh*

And giving science one more asteroid?

Brief, my dear fellow, you instructed me,
At Alfred's and not Istria! proved a
snob

May turn a million to account although
His brother be no Duke, and see good days
10 Without the girl he lost and someone
gained.

The end is, after one year's tutelage,
Having, by your help, touched society,
Polo, Tent-pegging, Hurlingham, the
Rink —

I leave all these delights, by your advice,
And marry my young pretty cousin here
Whose place, whose oaks ancestral you
behold.

(Her father was in partnership with
mine —

Does not his purchase look a pedigree?)
My million will be tails and tassels smart

20 To this plump-bodied kite, this house and
land

Which, set a-soaring, pulls me, soft as
sleep,

Along life's pleasant meadow, — arm left
free

To lock a friend's in, — whose but yours,
old boy?

Arm in arm glide we over rough and
smooth,

While hand, to pocket held, saves cash
from cards.

Now, if you don't esteem ten thousand
pounds

(— Which I shall probably discover snug
Hid somewhere in the column-corner
capped

With 'Credit,' based on 'Balance,' —
which, I swear,

30 By this time next month I shall quite forget
Whether I lost or won — ten thousand
pounds,

Which at this instant I would give . . .
let's see,

For Galopin¹ — nay, for that Gainsbor-
ough

Sir Richard won't sell, and, if bought by
me,

Would get my glance and praise some
twice a year, —)

Well, if you don't esteem that price dirt-
cheap

For teaching me Dalmatia was mistake —
Why then, my last illusion-bubble breaks,

40 My one discovered phoenix proves a goose,
My cleverest of all companions — oh,

Was worth nor ten pence nor ten thousand
pounds!

Come! Be yourself again! So endeth
here

The morning's lesson! Never while life
lasts

Do I touch card again. To breakfast now!
To bed — I can't say, since you needs
must start

For station early — oh, the down-train still,
First plan and best plan — toward trip
be hanged!

You're due at your big brother's — pay
that debt,

Then owe me not a farthing! Order
eggs —

And who knows but there's trout obtain-
able?"

The fine man looks well-nigh malignant:
then —

"Sir, please subdue your mannaer! Debts
are debts:

I pay mine — debts of this sort — cer-
tainly.

What do I care how you regard your gains,
Want them or want them not? The thing
I want

Is — not to have a story circulate
From club to club — how, bent on clearing
out

Young So-and-so, young So-and-so cleaned
me,

Then set the empty kennel flush again,
Ignored advantage and forgave his friend — 60

For why? There was no wringing blood
from stone!

Oh, don't be savage! You would hold
your tongue,

Bite it in two, as man may; but those
small

Hours in the smoking-room, when instance
apt

Rises to tongue's root, tingles on to tip,
And the thinned company consists of six

Capital well-known fellows one may trust!
Next week, it's in the 'World.' No,

thank you much.

I owe ten thousand pounds: I'll pay them!"

"Now, —
This becomes funny. You've made 70

friends with me:
I can't help knowing of the ways and
means!

Or stay! they say your brother closets up
Correggio's long-lost Leda; if he means

To give you that, and if you give it me . . ."

"I polished snob off to aristocrat?

You compliment me! father's apron still
Sticks out from son's court-vesture; still

silk purse

¹ A racehorse.

Roughs finger with some bristle sow-ear-born!
 Well, neither I nor you mean harm at heart!
 I owe you and shall pay you: which premised,
 Why should what follows sound like flattery?
 The fact is — you do compliment too much
 Your humble master, as I own I am;
 You owe me no such thanks as you protest.
 The polisher needs precious stone no less
 Than precious stone needs polisher: 'believe
 I struck no tint from out you but I found
 Snug lying first 'neath surface hair-breadth-deep!
 Beside, I liked the exercise: with skill
 Goes love to show skill for skill's sake.
 You see,
 I'm old and understand things: too absurd
 It were you pitched and tossed away your life,
 As diamond were Scotch-pebble! all the more,
 That I myself misused a stone of price.
 Born and bred clever — people used to say
 Clever as most men, if not something more —
 Yet here I stand a failure, cut awry
 Or left opaque, — no brilliant named and known.
 Whate'er my inner stuff, my outside's blank;
 I'm nobody — or rather, look that same —
 I'm — who I am — and know it; but I hold
 What in my hand out for the world to see?
 What ministry, what mission, or what book
 — I'll say, book even? Not a sign of these!
 I began — laughing — '*All these when I like!*'
 I end with — well, you've hit it! — '*This boy's cheque*'
 For just as many thousands as he'll spare!
 The first — I could, and would not; your spare cash
 I would, and could not: have no scruple, pray,
 But, as I hoped to pocket yours, pouch mine
 — When you are able!"
 "Which is — when to be?
 I've heard, great characters require a fall
 Of fortune to show greatness by uprise:
They touch the ground to jollily rebound,
 Add to the Album! Let a fellow share
 Your secret of superiority!
 I know, my banker makes the money breed

Money; I eat and sleep, he simply takes
 The dividends and cuts the coupons off,
 Sells out, buys in, keeps doubling, tripling cash,
 While I do nothing but receive and spend.
 But you, spontaneous generator, hatch
 A wind-egg; cluck, and forth struts Capital
 As interest to me from egg of gold.
 I am grown curious: pay me by all means!
 How will you make the money?"
 "Mind your own —
 Not my affair. Enough: or money, or 50
 Money's worth, as the case may be, expect
 Ere month's end, — keep but patient for a month!
 Who's for a stroll to station? Ten's the time;
 Your man, with my things, follow in the trap;
 At stoppage of the down-train, play the arrived
 On platform, and you'll show the due fatigue
 Of the night-journey, — not much sleep, — perhaps,
 Your thoughts were on before you — yes, indeed,
 You join them, being happily awake
 With thought's sole object as she smiling 60
 sits
 At breakfast-table. I shall dodge meantime
 In and out station-precinct, wile away
 The hour till up my engine pants and smokes.
 No doubt, she goes to fetch you. Never fear!
 She gets no glance at me, who shame such saints!"

II.

So, they ring bell, give orders, pay, depart
 Amid profuse acknowledgment from host
 Who well knows what may bring the younger back.
 They light cigar, descend in twenty steps
 The "*calm acclivity*," inhale — beyond 70
 Tobacco's balm — the better smoke of turf
 And wood fire, — cottages at cookery
 I' the morning, — reach the main road
 straitening on
 'Twixt wood and wood, two black walls
 full of night
 Slow to disperse, though mists thin fast
 before
 The advancing foot, and leave the flint-dust fine
 Each speck with its fire-sparkle. Presently
 The road's end with the sky's beginning
 mix

In one magnificence of glare, due East,
So high the sun rides, — May's the merry
month.

They slacken pace: the younger stops
abrupt,
Discards cigar, looks his friend full in face.

"All right; the station comes in view at
end;

Five minutes from the beech-clump, there
you are!

I say: let's halt, let's borrow yonder gate
Of its two magpies, sit and have a talk!

Do let a fellow speak a moment! More
I think about and less I like the thing —
No, you must let me! Now, be good for
once!

Ten thousand pounds be done for, dead
and damned!

We played for love, not hate: yes, hate!
I hate

Thinking you beg or borrow or reduce
To strychnine some poor devil of a lord
Licked at Unlimited Loo. I had the cash
To lose — you knew that! — lose and none
the less

Whistle to-morrow: it's not every chap
Affords to take his punishment so well!

Now, don't be angry with a friend whose
fault

Is that he thinks — upon my soul, I do —
Your head the best head going. Oh, one
sees

Names in the newspaper — great this, great
that,

Gladstone, Carlyle, the Laureate: — much
I care!

Others have their opinion, I keep mine:
Which means — by right you ought to have
the things

I want a head for. Here's a pretty place,
My cousin's place, and presently my place,
Not yours! I'll tell you how it strikes a
man.

My cousin's fond of music and of course
Plays the piano (it won't be for long!)
A brand-new bore she calls a 'semi-
grand,'

Rosewood and pearl, that blocks the draw-
ing-room,

And cost no end of money. Twice a week
Down comes Herr Somebody and seats
himself,

Sets to work teaching — with his teeth on
edge —

I've watched the rascal. 'Does he play
first-rate?'

I ask: 'I rather think so,' answers she —
'He's What's-his-Name!' — 'Why give
you lessons then?' —

'I pay three guineas and the train beside.' —
'This instrument, has he one such at
home?' —

'He? Has to practise on a table-top,
When he can't hire the proper thing.' —

'I see!
You've the piano, he the skill, and God
The distribution of such gifts.' So here:
After your teaching, I shall sit and strum
Polkas on this piano of a Place
You'd make resound with *Rule Britannia!*"

"Thanks!

I don't say but this pretty cousin's place,
Appended with your million, tempts my 50
hand
As key-board I might touch with some
effect."

"Then, why not have obtained the like?
House, land,
Money, are things obtainable, you see,
By clever head-work: ask my father else!
You, who teach me, why not have learned,
yourself?

Played like Herr Somebody with power to
thump
And flourish and the rest, not bend de-
mure

Pointing out blunders — 'Sharp, not
natural!

Permit me — on the black key use the
thumb!

There's some fatality, I'm sure! You say 60
'Marry the cousin, that's your proper move!'
And I do use the thumb and hit the sharp:
You should have listened to your own head's
hint,

As I to you! The puzzle's past my power,
How you have managed — with such stuff,
such means —

Not to be rich nor great nor happy man:
Of which three good things where's a sign
at all?

Just look at Dizzy!¹ Come, — what
tripped your heels?

Instruct a goose that boasts wings and can't
fly!

I wager I have guessed it! — never found 70
The old solution of the riddle fail!

'Who was the woman?' I don't ask, but
— 'Where

I' the path of life stood she who tripped
you?'"

"Goose

You truly are! I own to fifty years.
Why don't I interpose and cut out — you?
Compete with five-and-twenty? Age, my
boy!"

"Old man, no nonsense! — even to a boy
That's ripe at least for rationality
Rapped into him, as may be mine was, once!
I've had my small adventure lesson me 80

¹ Mr. Disraeli.

Over the knuckles! — likely, I forget
The sort of figure youth cuts now and then,
Competing with old shoulders but young
head
Despite the fifty grizzling years!"

"Aha?

Then that means — just the bullet in the
blade

Which brought Dalmatia on the brain, —
that, too,

Came of a fatal creature? Can't pretend
Now for the first time to surmise as much!
Make a clean breast! Recount! a secret's
safe

'Twixt you, me and the gate-post!"

"— Can't pretend,

Neither, to never have surmised your wish!
It's no use, — case of unextracted ball —
Winces at finger-touching. Let things be!"

"Ah, if you love your love still! I hate
mine."

"I can't hate."

"I won't teach you; and won't tell
You, therefore, what you please to ask of
me:

As if I, also, may not have my ache!"

"My sort of ache? No, no! and yet —
perhaps!

All comes of thinking you superior still.
But live and learn! I say! Time's up!
Good jump!

You old, indeed! I fancy there's a cut
Across the wood, a grass path: shall we
try?

It's venturesome, however!"

"Stop, my boy!

Don't think I'm stingy of experience!
Life

— It's like this wood we leave. Should
you and I

Go wandering about there, though the gaps
We went in and came out by were opposed
As the two poles, still, somehow, all the
same,

By nightfall we should probably have
chanced

On much the same main points of interest—
Both of us measured girth of mossy trunk,
Stript ivy from its strangle prey, clapped
hands

At squirrel, sent a fir-cone after crow,
And so forth, — never mind what time be-
twixt.

So in our lives; allow I entered mine
Another way than you: 'tis possible
I ended just by knocking head against

That plaguy low-hung branch yourself be-
gan

By getting bump from; as at last you too
May stumble o'er that stump which first 40
of all

Bade me walk circumspectly. Head and
feet

Are vulnerable both, and I, foot-sure,
Forgot that ducking down saves brow from
bruise.

I, early old, played young man four years
since

And failed confoundedly: so, hate alike
Failure and who caused failure, — curse
her cant!"

"Oh, I see! You, though somewhat past
the prime,"

Were taken with a rosebud beauty! Ah —
But how should chits distinguish? She ad-
mired

Your marvel of a mind, I'll undertake! 50
But as to body . . . nay, I mean . . .
that is,

When years have told on face and figure
. . ."

"Thanks

Mister *Sufficiently-Instructed!* Such
No doubt was bound to be the consequence
To suit your self-complacency: she liked
My head enough, but loved some heart
beneath

Some head with plenty of brown hair atop
After my young friend's fashion! What
becomes

Of that fine speech you made a minute
since

About the man of middle age you found 60
A formidable peer at twenty-one?

So much for your mock-moesty! and yet
I back your first against this second sprout
Of observation, insight, what you please.

My middle age, Sir, had too much success!
It's odd: my case occurred four years
ago

I finished just while you commenced that
turn

I' the wood of life that takes us to the
wealth

Of honeysuckle, heaped for who can reach.
Now, I don't boast: it's bad style, and be- 70
side,

The feat proves easier than it looks: I
plucked

Full many a flower unnamed in that
bouquet

(Mostly of peonies and poppies, though!)
Good nature sticks into my button-hole.
Therefore it was with nose in want of snuff
Rather than Ess or Psidium,¹ that I chanced
On what — so far from 'rosebud beauty'
. . . Well —

¹ Scents.

- She's dead: at least you never heard her name;
 She was no courtly creature, had nor birth
 Nor breeding — mere fine-lady-breeding;
 but
 Oh, such a wonder of a woman! Grand
 As a Greek statue! Stick fine clothes on
 that,
 Style that a Duchess or a Queen, — you
 know,
 Artists would make an outcry: all the more,
 That she had just a statue's sleepy grace
 Which broods o'er its own beauty. Nay,
 her fault
 10 (Don't laugh!) was just perfection: for
 suppose
 Only the little flaw, and I had peeped
 Inside it, learned what soul inside was like.
 At Rome some tourist raised the grit be-
 neath
 A Venus' forehead with his whittling-
 knife —
 I wish, — now, — I had played that brute,
 brought blood
 To surface from the depths I fancied chalk!
 As it was, her mere face surprised so much
 That I stopped short there, struck on heap,
 as stares
 The cockney stranger at a certain bust
 20 With drooped eyes, — she's the thing I
 have in mind, —
 Down at my Brother's. All sufficient
 prize —
 Such outside! Now, — confound me for
 a prig! —
 Who cares? I'll make a clean breast once
 for all!
 Beside, you've heard the gossip. My life
 long
 I've been a woman-liker, — liking means
 Loving and so on. There's a lengthy list
 By this time I shall have to answer for —
 So say the good folk: and they don't guess
 half —
 For the worst is, let once collecting-itch
 30 Possess you, and, with perspicacity,
 Keeps growing such a greediness that theft
 Follows at no long distance, — there's the
 fact!
 I knew that on my Leporello¹-list
 Might figure this, that, and the other name
 Of feminine desirability,
 But if I happened to desire inscribe,
 Along with these, the only Beautiful —
 Here was the unique specimen to snatch
 Or now or never. 'Beautiful' I said —
 40 'Beautiful' say in cold blood, — boiling
 then
 To tune of 'Haste, secure whatever the
 cost
*This rarity, die in the act, be damned,
 So you complete collection, crown your list!*
- It seemed as though the whole world, once
 aroused
 By the first notice of such wonder's birth,
 Would break bounds to contest my prize
 with me
 The first discoverer, should she but emerge
 From that safe den of darkness where she
 dozed
 Till I stole in, that country-parsonage
 Where, country-parson's daughter, mother-
 less,
 Brotherless, sisterless, for eighteen years
 She had been vegetating lily-like.
 Her father was my brother's tutor, got
 The living that way: him I chanced to see —
 Her I saw — her the world would grow
 one eye
 To see, I felt no sort of doubt at all!
 'Secure her!' cried the devil: 'afterward
 Arrange for the disposal of the prize!'
 The devil's doing! yet I seem to think —
 Now, when all's done, — think with 'a
 head reposed'
 In French phrase — hope I think I meant
 to do
 All requisite for such a rarity
 When I should be at leisure, have due time
 To learn requirement. But in evil day —
 Bless me, at week's end, long as any year,
 The father must begin 'Young Somebody,
 Much recommended — for I break a rule —
 Comes here to read, next Long Vacation.'
 'Young!'
 That did it. Had the epithet been 'rich,'
 'Noble,' 'a genius,' even 'handsome,' —
 but
 — 'Young!' —
 "I say — just a word! I want to know —
 You are not married?"
 "I?"
 "Nor ever were?"
 "Never! Why?"
 "Oh, then — never mind! Go on!
 I had a reason for the question,"
 "Come, —
 You could not be the young man?"
 "No, indeed!
 Certainly — if you never married her!"
 "That I did not: and there's the curse,
 you'll see!
 Nay, all of it's one curse, my life's mistake
 Which, nourished with manure that's war-
 ranted
 To make the plant bear wisdom, blew out
 full
 In folly beyond field-flower-foolishness!

¹ Don Giovanni's valet.

The lies I used to tell my womankind,
 Knowing they disbelieved me all the time
 Though they required my lies, their decent
 due,
 This woman — not so much believed, I'll
 say,
 As just anticipated from my mouth:
 Since being true, devoted, constant — she
 Found constancy, devotion, truth, the plain
 And easy commonplace of character.
 No mock-heroics but seemed natural
 To her who underneath the face, I knew
 Was fairness' self, possessed a heart, I
 judged
 Must correspond in folly just as far
 Beyond the common, — and a mind to
 match, —
 Not made to puzzle conjurers like me
 Who, therein, proved the fool who fronts
 you, Sir,
 And begs leave to cut short the ugly
 rest!
 'Trust me!' I said: she trusted. 'Marry
 me!'
 Or rather, 'We are married: when, the
 rite?'
 That brought on the collector's next-day
 qualm
 At counting acquisition's cost. There
 lay
 My marvel, there my purse more light by
 much
 Because of its late lie-expenditure:
 Ill-judged such moment to make fresh de-
 mand —
 To cage as well as catch my rarity!
 So, I began explaining. At first word
 Outbroke the horror. 'Then, my truths
 were lies!'
 I tell you, such an outbreak, such new
 strange
 All-unsuspected revelation — soul
 As supernaturally grand as face
 Was fair beyond example — that at once
 Either I lost — or, if it please you, found
 My senses, — stammered — somehow —
 'Jest! and now,
 Earnest! Forget all else but — heart has
 loved,
 Does love, shall love you ever! take the
 hand!'
 Not she! no marriage for superb disdain,
 Contempt incarnate!"

"Yes, it's different, —
 It's only like in being four years since.
 I see now!"

"Well, what did disdain do next,
 Think you?"

"That's past me: did not marry you! —
 That's the main thing I care for, I suppose.
 Turned nun, or what?"

"Why, married in a month
 Some parson, some smug crop-haired
 smooth-chinned sort
 Of curate-creature, I suspect, — dived
 down,
 Down, deeper still, and came up some-
 where else —
 I don't know where — I've not tried much
 to know, —
 In short, she's happy: what the clodpoles
 call
 'Countrified' with a vengeance! leads the
 life
 Respectable and all that drives you mad:
 Still — where, I don't know, and that's best 50
 for both."

"Well, that she did not like you, I conceive.
 But why should you hate her, I want to
 know?"

"My good young friend, — because or her
 or else
 Malicious Providence I have to hate.
 For, what I tell you proved the turning-
 point
 Of my whole life and fortune toward suc-
 cess
 Or failure. If I drown, I lay the fault
 Much on myself who caught at reed not
 rope,
 But more on reed which, with a pack-
 thread's pith,
 Had buoyed me till the minute's cramp 60
 could thaw
 And I strike out afresh and so be saved.
 It's easy saying — I had sunk before,
 Disqualified myself by idle days
 And busy nights, long since, from holding
 hard
 On cable, even, had fate cast me such!
 You boys don't know how many times men
 fail
 Perforce o' the little to succeed i' the large,
 Husband their strength, let slip the petty
 prey,
 Collect the whole power for the final
 pounce.
 My fault was the mistaking man's main 70
 prize
 For intermediate boy's diversion; clap
 Of boyish hands here frightened game away
 Which, once gone, goes for ever. Oh, at
 first
 I took the anger easily, nor much
 Minded the anguish — having learned that
 storms
 Subside, and teapot-tempests are akin.
 Time would arrange things, mend what-
 e'er might be
 Somewhat amiss; precipitation, eh?
 Reason and rhyme prompt — reparation!
 Tiffs
 End properly in marriage and a dance! 80

I said 'We'll marry, make the past a blank' —

And never was such damnable mistake!

That interview, that laying bare my soul,
As it was first, so was it last chance — one
And only. Did I write? Back letter came
Unopened as it went. Inexorable
She fled, I don't know where, consoled herself

With the smug curate-creature: chop and change!

Sure am I, when she told her shaveling all

10 His Magdalen's adventure, tears were shed,
Forgiveness evangelically shown,
'Loose hair and lifted eye,' — as someone says.

And now, he's worshipped for his pains,
the sneak!"

"Well, but your turning-point of life,
what's here

To hinder you contesting Finsbury

With Orton,¹ next election? I don't see . . ."

"Not you! But *I* see. Slowly, surely,
creeps

Day by day o'er me the conviction — here
Was life's prize grasped at, gained, and
then let go!

20 — That with her — may be, for her — I
had felt

Ice in me melt, grow steam, drive to effect
Any or all the fancies sluggish here
I' the head that needs the hand she would
not take

And I shall never lift now. Lo, your
wood —

Its turnings which I likened life to!
Well, —

There she stands, ending every avenue,
Her visionary presence on each goal
I might have gained had we kept side by
side!

Still string nerve and strike foot? Her
frown forbids:

30 The steam congeals once more: I'm old
again!

Therefore I hate myself — but how much
worse

Do not I hate who would not understand,
Let me repair things — no, but sent a-slide
My folly falteringly, stumblingly
Down, down and deeper down until I
drop

Upon — the need of your ten thousand
pounds

And consequently loss of mine! I lose
Character, cash, nay, common-sense itself
Recounting such a lengthy cock-and-bull

40 Adventure — lose my temper in the
act . . ."

¹ Arthur Orton, the Tichborne claimant.

"And lose beside, — if I may supplement
The list of losses, — train and ten-o'clock!
Hark, pant and puff, there travels the swart
sign!

So much the better! You're my captive
now!

I'm glad you trust a fellow: friends grow
thick

This way — that's twice said; we were
thickish, though,

Even last night, and, ere night comes again,
I prophesy good luck to both of us!

For see now! — back to '*balmy eminence*'
Or '*calm acclivity*,' or what's the word! 5a

Bestow you there an hour, concoct at ease
A sonnet for the Album, while I put

Bold face on, best foot forward, make for
house,

March in to aunt and niece, and tell the
truth —

(Even white-lying goes against my taste
After your little story). Oh, the niece

Is rationality itself! The aunt —
If she's amenable to reason too —

Why, you stopped short to pay her due
respect,

And let the Duke wait (I'll work well the
Duke).

If she grows gracious, I return for you;
If thunder's in the air, why — bear your
doom,

Dine on rump-steaks and port, and shake
the dust

Of aunty from your shoes as off you go

By evening-train, nor give the thing a
thought

How you shall pay me — that's as sure as
fate,

Old fellow! Off with you, face left about!
Yonder's the path I have to pad. You see,

I'm in good spirits, God knows why! Per-
haps

Because the woman did not marry you 7a
— Who look so hard at me, — and have

the right,
One must be fair and own."

The two stand still
Under an oak.

"Look here!" resumes the youth.
"I never quite knew how I came to like

You — so much — whom I ought not court
at all:

Nor how you had a leaning just to me
Who am assuredly not worth your pains.

For there must needs be plenty such as
you

Somewhere about, — although I can't say
where, —

Able and willing to teach all you know; 8a
While — how can you have missed a score

like me
With money and no wit, precisely each

A pupil for your purpose, were it — ease
 Fool's poke of tutor's *honorarium*-fee?
 And yet, howe'er it came about, I felt
 At once my master: you as prompt de-
 scribed
 Your man, I warrant, so was bargain struck.
 Now, these same lines of liking, loving, run
 Sometimes so close together they con-
 verge —
 Life's great ad-ventures — you know what
 I mean —
 In people. Do you know, as you advanced,
 It got to be uncommonly like fact
 We two had fallen in with — liked and
 loved
 Just the same woman in our different ways?
 I began life — poor groundling as I prove —
 Winged and ambitious to fly high: why
 not?
 There's something in 'Don Quixote' to the
 point,
 My shrewd old father used to quote and
 praise —
 'Am I born man?' asks Sancho: '*being*
man,
By possibility I may be Pope!'
 So, Pope I meant to make myself, by
 step
 And step, whereof the first should be to
 find
 A perfect woman; and I tell you this —
 If what I fixed on, in the order due
 Of undertakings, as next step, had first
 Of all disposed itself to suit my tread,
 And I had been, the day I came of age,
 Returned at head of poll for Westminster
 — Nay, and moreover summoned by the
 Queen
 At week's end, when my maiden-speech
 bore fruit,
 To form and head a Tory ministry —
 It would not have seemed stranger, no, nor
 been
 More strange to me, as now I estimate,
 Than what did happen — sober truth, no
 dream.
 I saw my wonder of a woman, — laugh,
 I'm past that! — in Commemoration-
 week.
 A plenty have I seen since, fair and
 foul, —
 With eyes, too, helped by your sagacious
 wink;
 But one to match that marvel — no least
 trace,
 Least touch of kinship and community!
 The end was — I did somehow state the
 fact,
 Did, with no matter what imperfect words,
 One way or other give to understand
 That woman, soul and body were her slave
 Would she but take, but try them — any
 test
 Of wit, and some poor test of power beside:

So did the strings within my brain grow
 tense
 And capable of . . . hang similitudes!
 She answered kindly but beyond appeal.
 'No sort of *habe* for me, who came too late.
 She was another's. Love went — mine to
 her,
 Hers just as loyally to someone else.' 50
 Of course! I might expect it! Nature's
 law —
 Given the peerless woman, certainly
 Somewhere shall be the peerless man to
 match!
 I acquiesced at once, submitted me
 In something of a stupor, went my way.
 I fancy there had been some talk before
 Of somebody — her father or the like —
 To coach me in the holidays, — that's how
 I came to get the sight and speech of her, —
 But I had sense enough to break off sharp, 60
 Save both of us the pain."

"Quite right there!"

"Eh?
 Quite wrong, it happens! Now comes
 worst of all!
 Yes, I did sulk aloof and let alone
 The lovers — I disturb the angel-mates?"

"Seraph paired off with cherub!"

"Thank you! While
 I never plucked up courage to inquire
 Who he was, even, — certain-sure of this,
 That nobody I knew of had blue wings
 And wore a star-crown as he needs must
 do, —
 Some little lady, — plainish, pock-marked 70
 girl,
 Finds out my secret in my woeful face,
 Comes up to me at the Apollo Ball,
 And pityingly pours her wine and oil
 This way into the wound: '*Dear f-f-friend,*
Why waste affection thus on — must I
say,
A somewhat worthless objec. Who's her
choice —
Irrevocable as deliberate —
Out of the wide world? I shall name no
names —
But there's a person in society,
Who, blessed with rank and talent, has 80
grown grey
In idleness and sin of every sort
Except hypocrisy: he's thrice her age,
A by-word for "successes with the sex"
As the French say — and, as we ought to say,
Consummately a liar and a rogue,
Since — show me where's the woman won
without
The help of this one lie which she believes —
That — never mind how things have come
to pass,

And let who loves have loved a thousand times —

All the same he now loves her only, loves Her ever! if by "won" you just mean "sold," That's quite another compact. Well, this scamp,

Continuing descent from bad to worse, Must leave his fine and fashionable prey (Who — fathered, brothered, husbanded, — are hedged

About with thorny danger) and apply His arts to this poor country ignorance

10 Who sees forthwith in the first rag of man Her model hero! Why continue waste On such a woman treasures of a heart Would yet find solace, — yes, my f-f-friend In some congenial — fiddle-diddle-dee?"

"Pray, is the pleasant gentleman described Exact the portrait which my 'f-f-friends' Recognise as so like? 'Tis evident You half surmised the sweet original Could be no other than myself, just now! 20 Your stop and start were flattering!"

"Of course Caricature's allowed for in a sketch! The longish nose becomes a foot in length, The swarthy cheek gets copper-coloured, — still,

Prominent beak and dark-hued skin are facts:

And 'parson's daughter' — 'young man coachable' —

'Elderly party' — 'four years since' — were facts

To fasten on, a moment! Marriage, though —

That made the difference, I hope."

"All right!

I never married; wish I had — and then 30 Unwish it: people kill their wives, sometimes!

I hate my mistress, but I'm murder-free. In your case, where's the grievance? You came last,

The earlier bird picked up the worm. Suppose

You, in the glory of your twenty-one, Had happened to precede myself! 'tis odds But this gigantic juvenility,

This offering of a big arm's bony hand — I'd rather shake than feel shake me, I know —

Had moved my dainty mistress to admire

40 An altogether new Ideal — deem Idolatry less due to life's decline Productive of experience, powers mature By dint of usage, the made man — no boy That's all to make! I was the earlier bird —

And what I found, I let fall; what you missed

Who is the fool that blames you for?"

"Myself — For nothing, everything! For finding out She, whom I worshipped, was a worshipper In turn of . . . but why stir up settled mud?

She married him — the fifty-years-old 50 rake —

How you have teased the talk from me! At last

My secret's told you. I inquired no more, Nay, stopped ears when informants unshut mouth;

Enough that she and he live, deuce take where,

Married and happy, or else miserable — It's 'Cut-the-pack;' she turned up ace or knave,

And I left Oxford, England, dug my hole Out in Dalmatia, till you drew me thence Badger-like, — 'Back to London' was the word —

'Do things, a many, there, you fancy hard, 60 I'll undertake are easy!' — the advice.

I took it, had my twelvemonth's fling with you —

(Little hand holding large hand pretty tight

For all its delicacy — eh, my lord?), Until when, t'other day, I got a turn

Somehow and gave up tired: and 'Rest!' bade you,

'Marry your cousin, double your estate, And take your ease by all means!' So, I loll

On this the springy sofa, mine next month —

Or should loll, but that you must needs 70 beat rough

The very down you spread me out so smooth.

I wish this confidence were still to make! Ten thousand pounds? You owe me

twice the sum

For stirring up the black depths! There's repose

Or, at least, silence when misfortune seems All that one has to bear; but folly — yes,

Folly, it all was! Fool to be so meek, So humble, — such a coward rather say!

Fool, to adore the adorer of a fool! Not to have faced him, tried (a useful 80 hint)

My big and bony, here, against the bunch Of lily-coloured five with signet-ring,

Most like, for little-finger's sole defence — Much as you flaunt the blazon there! I grind

My teeth, that bite my very heart, to think —

To know I might have made that woman mine

But for the folly of the coward — know — Or what's the good of my apprenticeship

This twelvemonth to a master in the art?

Mine — had she been mine — just one
moment mine
For honour, for dishonour — anyhow,
So that my life, instead of stagnant . . .
Well,
You've poked and proved stagnation is not
sleep —
Hang you!"

"Hang you for an ungrateful goose!
All this means — I who since I knew you
first
Have helped you to conceit yourself this
cock
O' the dunghill with all hens to pick and
choose —
Ought to have helped you when shell first
was chipped
By chick that wanted prompting '*Use the
spur!*'
While I was elsewhere putting mine to use.
As well might I blame you who kept aloof,
Seeing you could not guess I was alive,
Never advised me '*Do as I have done —
Reverence such a jewel as your luck
Has scratched up to enrich unworthiness!*'
As your behaviour was should mine have
been,
— Faults which we both, too late, are sorry
for:
Opposite ages, each with its mistake!
'*If youth but would — if age but could,*
you know.
Don't let us quarrel. Come, we're —
young and old —
Neither so badly off. Go you your way,
Cut to the Cousin! I'll to Inn, await
The issue of diplomacy with Aunt,
And wait my hour on '*calm activity*'
In rumination manifold — perhaps
About ten thousand pounds I have to
pay!"

III.

Now, as the elder lights the fresh cigar
Conducive to resource, and saunteringly
Betakes him to the left-hand backward
path, —
While, much sedate, the younger strides
away
To right and makes for — islanded in lawn
And edged with shrubbery — the brilliant
bit
Of Barry's building that's the Place, — a
pair
Of women, at this nick of time, one young,
One very young, are ushered with due
pomp
Into the same Inn-parlour — "*disengaged
Entirely now!*" the obsequious landlord
smiles,
"*Since the late occupants — whereof but one
Was quite a stranger*" — (smile enforced
by bow)

"*Left, a full two hours since, to catch the
train,
Probably for the stranger's sake!*" (Bow,
smile,
And backing out from door soft-closed
behind.)

Woman and girl, the two, alone inside,
Begin their talk: the girl, with sparkling
eyes —

"Oh, I forewent him purposely! but you,
Who joined at — journeyed from the
Junction here —

I wonder how he failed your notice. Few
Stop at our station: fellow-passengers
Assuredly you were — I saw indeed 50
His servant, therefore he arrived all right.
I wanted, you know why, to have you safe
Inside here first of all, so dodged about
The dark end of the platform; that's his
way —

To swing from station straight to avenue
And stride the half a mile for exercise.
I fancied you might notice the huge boy.
He soon gets o'er the distance; at the
house

He'll hear I went to meet him and have
missed;

He'll wait. No minute of the hour's too 60
much

Meantime for our preliminary talk:

First word of which must be — O good
beyond

Expression of all goodness — you to
come!"

The elder, the superb one, answers slow.

"There was no helping that. You called
for me,

Cried, rather: and my old heart answered
you.

Still, thank me! since the effort breaks a
vow —

At least, a promise to myself."

"I know!

How selfish get you happy folk to be!

If I should love my husband, must I needs 70

Sacrifice straightway all the world to him,

As you do? Must I never dare leave house

On this dread Arctic expedition, out

And in again, six mortal hours, though you,

You even, my own friend for evermore,

Adjure me — fast your friend till rude love

pushed
Poor friendship from her vantage — just
to grant

The quarter of a whole day's company
And counsel? This makes counsel so
much more

Need and necessity. For here's my block 80

Of stumbling: in the face of happiness

So absolute, fear chills me. If such change

In heart be but love's easy consequence,
Do I love? If to marry mean—let go
All I now live for, should my marriage
be?"

The other never once has ceased to gaze
On the great elm-tree in the open, posed
Placidly full in front, smooth bole, broad
branch,
And leafage, one green plenitude of May.
The gathered thought runs into speech at
last.

"O you exceeding beauty, bosomful
10 Of lights and shades, murmurs and
silences,
Sun-warmth, dew-coolness, — squirrel, bee
and bird,
High, higher, highest, till the blue pro-
claims
'Leave earth, there's nothing better till next
step
Heavenward!' — so, off flies what has
wings to help!"

And henceforth they alternate. Says the
girl —

"That's saved then: marriage spares the
early taste."

"Four years now, since my eye took note
of tree!"

"If I had seen no other tree but this
My life long, while yourself came straight,
you said,
20 From tree which overstretched you and
was just
One fairy tent with pitcher-leaves that held
Wine, and a flowery wealth of suns and
moons,
And magic fruits whereon the angels feed —
I looking out of window on a tree
Like yonder — otherwise well-known,
much-liked,
Yet just an English ordinary elm —
What marvel if you cured me of conceit
My elm's bird-bee-and-squirrel tenantry
Was quite the proud possession I sup-
posed?"

30 And there is evidence you tell me true.
The fairy marriage-tree reports itself
Good guardian of the perfect face and
form,
Fruits of four years' protection! Married
friend,
You are more beautiful than ever!"

"Yes:

I think that likely. I could well dispense
With all thought fair in feature, mine or no,
Leave but enough of face to know me by —
With all found fresh in youth except such
strength

As lets a life-long labour earn repose
Death sells at just that price, they say; 45
and so,
Possibly, what I care not for, I keep."

"How you must know he loves you!
Chill, before,
Fear sinks to freezing. Could I sacrifice —
Assured my lover simply loves my soul —
One nose-breadth of fair feature? No,
indeed!
Your own love . . ."

"The preliminary hour —
Don't waste it!"

"But I can't begin at once!
The angel's self that comes to hear me
speak
Drives away all the care about the speech.
What an angelic mystery you are — 50
Now — that is certain! when I knew you
first,
No break of halo and no bud of wing!
I thought I knew you, saw you, round and
through,
Like a glass ball; suddenly, four years
since,
You vanished, how and whither? Mys-
tery!
Wherefore? No mystery at all: you loved,
Were loved again, and left the world of
course:
Who would not? Lapped four years in
fairyland,
Out comes, by no less wonderful a chance,
The changeling, touched athwart her 60
trellised bliss
Of blush-rose bower by just the old friend's
voice
That's now struck dumb at her own
potency.
I talk of my small fortunes? Tell me yours
Rather! The fool I ever was — I am,
You see that: the true friend you ever had,
You have, you also recognise. Perhaps,
Giving you all the love of all my heart,
Nature, that's niggard in me, has denied
The after-birth of love there's someone
claims
— This huge boy, swinging up the avenue; 70
And I want counsel: is defect in me,
Or him who has no right to raise the love?
My cousin asks my hand: he's young
enough,
Handsome, — my maid thinks, — manly's
more the word:
He asked my leave to 'drop' the elm-tree
there,
Some morning before breakfast. Gentle-
ness
Goes with the strength, of course. He's
honest too,
Limpidly truthful. For ability —

All's in the rough yet. His first taste of
 life
 Seems to have somehow gone against the
 tongue:
 He travelled, tried things — came back,
 tried still more —
 He says he's sick of all. He's fond of me
 After a certain careless-earnest way
 I like: the iron's crude, — no polished
 steel
 Somebody forged before me. I am rich —
 That's not the reason, he's far richer: no,
 Nor is it that he thinks me pretty, — frank
 Undoubtedly on that point! He saw once
 The pink of face-perfection — oh, not
 you —
 Content yourself, my beauty! — for she
 proved
 So thoroughly a cheat, his charmer . . .
 nay,
 He runs into extremes, I'll say at once,
 Lest you say! Well, I understand he wants
 Someone to serve, something to do: and
 both
 Requisites so abound in me and mine
 That here's the obstacle which stops con-
 sent:
 The smoothness is too smooth, and I mis-
 trust
 The unseen cat beneath the counterpane.
 Therefore I thought *'Would she but judge
 for me,*
Who, judging for herself succeeded so!'
 Do I love him, does he love me, do both
 Mistake for knowledge — easy ignorance?
 Appeal to its proficient in each art!
 I got rough-smooth through a piano-piece,
 Rattled away last week till tutor came,
 Heard me to end, then grunted *'Ach, mein
 Gott!*
Sagen Sie "easy"? Every note is wrong.
*All thumped mit wrist: we'll trouble fingers
 now.*
The Fräulein will please roll up Raff again
And exercise at Czerny for one month!'
 Am I to roll up cousin, exercise
 At Trollope's novels for one month? Pro-
 nounce!"

"Now, place each in the right position first,
 Adviser and advised one! I perhaps
 Am three — nay, four years older; am,
 beside,
 A wife: advantages — to balance which,
 You have a full fresh joyous sense of life
 That finds you out life's fit food every-
 where,
 Detects enjoyment where I, slow and dull,
 Fumble at fault. Already, these four years,
 Your merest glimpses at the world without
 Have shown you more than ever met my
 gaze;
 And now, by joyance you inspire joy, —
 learn

While you profess to teach, and teach
 although
 Avowedly a learner. I am dazed
 Like any owl by sunshine which just sets
 The sparrow preening plumage! Here's
 to spy
 — Your cousin! You have scanned him 50
 all your life,
 Little or much; I never saw his face.
 You have determined on a marriage —
 used
 Deliberation therefore — I'll believe
 No otherwise, with opportunity
 For judgment so abounding! Here stand
 I —
 Summoned to give my sentence, for a whim,
 (Well, at first cloud-fleck thrown athwart
 your blue)
 Judge what is strangeness' self to me, —
 say *'Wed!'*
 Or *'Wed not!'* whom you promise I shall
 judge
 Presently, at propitious lunch-time, just 60
 While he carves chicken! Sends he leg
 for wing?
 That revelation into character
 And conduct must suffice me! Quite as
 well
 Consult with yonder solitary crow
 That eyes us from your elm-top!"

"Still the same!
 Do you remember, at the library
 We saw together somewhere, those two
 books
 Somebody said were noteworthy? One
 Lay wide on table, sprawled its painted
 leaves
 For all the world's inspection; shut on 70
 shelf
 Reclined the other volume, closed, clasped,
 locked —
 Clear to be let alone. Which page had we
 Preferred the turning over of? You were,
 Are, ever will be the locked lady, hold
 Inside you secrets written, — soul-ab-
 sorbed,
 My ink upon your blotting-paper. I —
 What trace of you have I to show in turn?
 Delicate secrets! No one juvenile
 Ever essayed at croquet and performed
 Superiorly: but I confided you 80
 The sort of hat he wore and hair it held.
 While you? One day a calm note comes
 by post:
'I am just married, you may like to hear.'
 Most men would hate you, or they ought;
 we love
 What we fear, — I do! *'Cold'* I shall
 expect
 My cousin calls you. I — dislike not him,
 But (if I comprehend what loving means)
 Love you immeasurably more — more —
 more

Than even he who, loving you his wife,
Would turn up nose at who impertinent,
Frivolous, forward — *loves* that excellence
Of all the earth he bows in worship to!
And who's this paragon of privilege?
Simply a country parson: his the charm
That worked the miracle! Oh, too absurd
But that you stand before me as you stand!
Such beauty does prove something, every-
thing!

10 Beauty's the prize-flower which dispenses
eye
From peering into what has nourished
root —
Dew or manure: the plant best knows its
place.
Enough, from teaching youth and tending
age
And hearing sermons, — haply writing
tracts, —
From such strange love-besprinkled com-
post, lo,
Out blows this triumph! Therefore love's
the soil
Plants find or fail of. You, with wit to
find,
Exercise wit on the old friend's behalf,
Keep me from failure! Scan and scrutinise
20 This cousin! Surely he's as worth your
pains
To study as my elm-tree, crow and all,
You still keep staring at. I read your
thoughts."

"At last?"

"At first! '*Would, tree, atop of thee
I winged were, like crow perched moveless
there,
And so could straightway soar, escape this
bore,
Back to my nest where broods whom I love
best —
The parson o'er his parish — garish —
rarish —*'

Oh I could bring the rhyme in if I tried:
The Album here inspires me! Quite apart
30 From lyrical expression, have I read
The stare aright, and sings not soul just
so?"

"Or rather so? '*Cool comfortable elm
That men make coffins out of, — none for me
At thy expense, so thou permit I glide
Under thy ferny feet, and there sleep, sleep,
Nor dread awaking though in heaven
itself!*'"

The younger looks with face struck sudden
white.

The elder answers its inquiry.

"Dear,

You are a guesser, not a '*clairvoyante*.'

40 I'll so far open you the locked and shelved

Volume, my soul, that you desire to see,
As let you profit by the title-page —"

"*Paradise Lost?*"

"*Inferno!* — All which comes
Of tempting me to break my vow. Stop
here!

Friend, whom I love the best in the whole
world,

Come at your call, be sure that I will do
All your requirement — see and say my
mind.

It may be that by sad apprenticeship
I have a keener sense: I'll task the same.
Only indulge me — here let sight and
speech

Happen — this Inn is neutral ground, you
know!

I cannot visit the old house and home,
Encounter the old sociality
Abjured for ever. Peril quite enough
In even this first — last, I pray it prove —
Renunciation of my solitude!

Back, you, to house and cousin! Leave
me here,

Who want no entertainment, carry still
My occupation with me. While I watch
The shadow inching round those ferny feet,
60 Tell him '*A school-friend wants a word
with me*'

Up at the inn: time, tide and train won't
wait:

I must go see her — on and off again —
You'll keep me company?' Ten minutes'
talk,

With you in presence, ten more afterward.
With who, alone, convoys me station-
bound,

And I see clearly — and say honestly
To-morrow: pen shall play tongue's part,
you know.

Go — quick! for I have made our hand-
in-hand

Return impossible. So scared you look, —
If cousin does not greet you with '*What
ghost*'

Has crossed your path?' I set him down
obtuse."

And after one more look, with face still
white,

The younger does go, while the elder stands
Occupied by the elm at window there.

IV.

Occupied by the elm; and, as its shade
Has crept clock-hand-wise till it ticks at
fern

Five inches further to the South, the door
Opens abruptly, someone enters sharp.

The elder man returned to wait the youth:
Never observes the room's new occupant,

Throws hat on table, stoops quick, elbow-
propped
Over the Album wide there, bends down
brow
A cogitative minute, whistles shrill,
Then, — with a cheery-hopeless laugh-
and-lose
Air of defiance to fate visibly
Casting the toils about him, — mouths
once more
“*Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!*”
Then clasps-to cover, sends book spinning
off
’T’other side table, looks up, starts erect
10 Full-face with her who, — roused from
that abstruse
Question, “*Will next tick tip the fern or
no?*”
Fronts him as fully.

All her languor breaks,
Away withers at once the weariness
From the black-blooded brow, anger and
hate
Convulse. Speech follows slower, but at
last —

“You here! I felt, I knew it would befall!
Knew, by some subtle undividable
Trick of the trickster, I should, silly-sooth,
Late or soon, somehow be allured to leave
20 Safe hiding and come take of him, arrears,
My torment due on four years’ respite!
Time

To pluck the bird’s healed breast of down
o’er wound!

Have your success! Be satisfied this sole
Seeing you has undone all heaven could do
These four years, puts me back to you and
hell!

What will next trick be, next success? No
doubt

When I shall think to glide into the grave,
There will you wait disguised as beckoning
Death,

And catch and capture me for evermore!
30 But, God, though I am nothing, be thou all!
Contest him for me! Strive, for he is
strong!”

Already his surprise dies palely out
In laugh of acquiescing impotence.
He neither gasps nor hisses: calm and
plain —

“I also felt and knew — but otherwise!
You out of hand and sight and care of me
These four years, whom I felt, knew, all
the while . . .

Oh, it’s no superstition! It’s a gift
O’ the gamester that he snuffs the unseen
powers

40 Which help or harm him. Well I knew
what lurked,

Lay perdue paralysing me, — drugged,
drownd

And damnified my soul and body both!
Down and down, see where you have
dragged me to,

You and your malice! I was, four years
since,

— Well, a poor creature! I became a
knave.

I squandered my own pence: I plump my
purse

With other people’s pounds. I practised
play

Because I liked it: play turns labour now
Because there’s profit also in the sport.

I gamed with men of equal age and craft: 5
I steal here with a boy as green as grass

Whom I have tightened hold on slow and
sure

This long while, just to bring about to-day
When the boy beats me hollow, buries me

In ruin who was sure to beggar him.
O time indeed I should look up and laugh

“*Surely she closes on me!*” Here you
stand!”

And stand she does: while volubility,
With him, keeps on the increase, for his
tongue

After long locking-up is loosed for once. 60

“Certain the taunt is happy!” he resumes:

“So, it was allured you — only I
— I, and none other — to this spectacle —

Your triumph, my despair — you woman-
fiend

That front me! Well, I have my wish,
then! See

The low wide brow oppressed by sweeps
of hair

Darker and darker as they coil and swathe
The crowned corpse-wanness whence the

eyes burn black
Not asleep now! not pin-points dwarfed

beneath

Either great bridging eyebrow — poor 70
blank beads —

Babies, I’ve pleased to pity in my time:
How they protrude and glow immense

with hate!
The long triumphant nose attains — re-
tains

Just the perfection; and there’s scarlet-
skein

My ancient enemy, her lip and lip,
Sense-free, sense-frighting lips clenched

cold and bold
Because of chin, that based resolve be-
neath!

Then the columnar neck completes the
whole

Greek-sculpture-baffling body! Do I see?

Can I observe? You wait next word to 80
come?

- Well, wait and want! since no one blight
I bid
Consume one least perfection. Each and
all,
As they are rightly shocking now to me,
So may they still continue! Value them?
Ay, as the vendor knows the money-worth
Of his Greek statue, fools aspire to buy,
And he to see the back of! Let us laugh!
You have absolved me from my sin at least!
You stand stout, strong, in the rude health
of hate,
10 No touch of the tame timid nullity
My cowardice, forsooth, has practised on!
Ay, while you seemed to hint some fine
fifth act
Of tragedy should freeze blood, end the
farce,
I never doubted all was joke. I kept,
May be, an eye alert on paragraphs,
Newspaper-notice, — let no inquest slip,
Accident, disappearance: sound and safe
Were you, my victim, not of mind to die!
So, my worst fancy that could spoil the
smooth
20 Of pillow, and arrest descent of sleep
Was *'Into what dim hole can she have dived,
She and her wrongs, her woe that's wearing
flesh
And blood away?'* Whereas, see, sorrow
swells!
Or, fattened, fulsome, have you fed on me,
Sucked out my substance? How much
gloss, I pray,
O'erbloomed these hair-swathes when
there crept from you
To me that craze, else unaccountable,
Which urged me to contest our county-seat
With whom but my own brother's nomi-
nee?
30 Did that mouth's pulp glow ruby from
carmine
While I misused my moment, pushed, —
one word, —
One hair's breadth more of gesture, —
idiot-like
Past passion, floundered on to the gro-
tesque,
And lost the heiress in a grin? At least,
You made no such mistake! You tickled
fish,
Landed your prize the true artistic way!
How did the smug young curate rise to tune
Of *'Friend, a fatal fact divides us. Love
Suits me no longer. I have suffered shame,*
40 *Betrayal: past is past; the future —
yours —
Shall never be contaminate by mine.
I might have spared me this confession, not
— Oh, never by some hideousest of lies,
Easy, impenetrable! No! but say,
By just the quiet answer — "I am cold."
Falsehood avunt, each shadow of thee,
hence!*
- Had happier fortune willed . . . but
dreams are vain.
Now, leave me — yes, for pity's sake!*
Aha,
Who fails to see the curate as his face
Reddened and whitened, wanted handker- 51
chief
At wrinkling brow and twinkling eye, until
Out burst the proper *'Angel, whom the
fiend
Has thought to smirch, — thy whiteness,
at one wipe
Of holy cambric, shall disgrace the swan!
Mine be the task' . . . and so forth!*
Fool? not he!
Cunning in flavours, rather! What but
sour
Suspected makes the sweetness doubly
sweet,
And what stings love from faint to flam-
boyant
But the fear-sprinkle? Even horror
helps —
*'Love's flame in me by such recited wrong 60
Drenched, quenched, indeed? It burns the
fiercelier thence!'*
Why, I have known men never love their
wives
Till somebody — myself, suppose — had
*'drenched
And quenched love,'* so the blockheads
whined: as if
The fluid fire that lifts the torpid limb
Were a wrong done to palsy. But I
thrilled
No palsied person: half my age, or less,
The curate was, I'll wager: o'er young
blood
Your beauty triumphed! Eh, but — was
it he?
Then, it was he, I heard of! None beside! 7
How frank you were about the audacious
boy
Who fell upon you like a thunderbolt —
Passion and protestation! He it was
Reserved *in petto!* Ay, and *'rich'* be-
side —
'Rich' — how supremely did disdain curl
nose!
All that I heard was — *'wedded to a priest;'*
Informants sunk youth, riches and the rest.
And so my lawless love parted loves,
That loves might come together with a
rush!
Surely this last achievement sucked me dry: 8
Indeed, that way my wits went. Mistress-
queen,
Be merciful and let your subject slink
Into dark safety! He's a beggar, see —
Do not turn back his ship, Australia-
bound,
And bid her land him right amid some
crowd
Of creditors, assembled by your curse!

Don't cause the very rope to crack (you
can!)
Whereon he spends his last (friend's) six-
pence, just
The moment when he hoped to hang
himself!
Be satisfied you beat him!"

She replies —

"Beat him! I do. To all that you
confess
Of abject failure, I extend belief.
Your very face confirms it: God is just!
Let my face — fix your eyes! — in turn
confirm
What I shall say. All-abject's but half
truth;
Add to all-abject knave as perfect fool!
So is it you probed human nature, so
Prognosticated of me? Lay these words
To heart then, or where God meant heart
should lurk!
That moment when you first revealed
yourself,
My simple impulse prompted — end forth-
with
The ruin of a life uprooted thus
To surely perish! How should such
spoiled tree
Henceforward baulk the wind of its worst
sport,
Fail to go falling deeper, falling down
From sin to sin until some depth were
reached
Doomed to the weakest by the wickedest
Of weak and wicked human kind? But
when,
That self-display made absolute, — behold
A new revelation! — round you pleased
to veer,
Propose me what should prompt annul the
past,
Make me '*amends by marriage*' — in your
phrase,
Incorporate me henceforth, body and soul,
With soul and body which mere brushing
past
Brought leprosy upon me — '*marry*' these!
Why, then despair broke, re-assurance
dawned,
Clear-sighted was I that who hurled con-
tempt
As I — thank God! — at the contemptible,
Was scarce an utter weakling. Rent
away
By treason from my rightful pride of place,
I was not destined to the shame below.
A cleft had caught me: I might perish
there,
But thence to be dislodged and whirled at
last
Where the black torrent sweeps the
sewage — no!

'*Bare breast be on hard rock,*' laughed out
my soul
In gratitude, '*howe'er rock's grip may* 40
grind!
The plain rough wretched holdfast shall
suffice
This wreck of me!' The wind, — I broke
in bloom
At passage of, — which stripped me bole
and branch,
Twisted me up and tossed me here, —
turns back,
And, playful ever, would replant the spoil?
Be satisfied, not one least leaf that's mine
Shall henceforth help wind's sport to
exercise!
Rather I give such remnant to the rock
Which never dreamed a straw would settle
there.
Rock may not thank me, may not feel my 50
breast,
Even: enough that *I* feel, hard and cold,
Its safety my salvation. Safe and saved,
I lived, live. When the tempter shall per-
suade
His prey to slip down, slide off, trust the
wind, —
Now that I know if God or Satan be
Prince of the Power of the Air, — then,
then, indeed,
Let my life end and degradation too!"

"Good!" he smiles, "true Lord Byron!
'*Tree and rock.*'
'*Rock*' — there's advancement! He's at
first a youth,
Rich, worthless therefore; next he grows 60
a priest:
Youth, riches prove a notable resource,
When to leave me for their possessor gluts
Malice abundantly; and now, last change,
The young rich parson represents a rock
— Bloodstone, no doubt. He's Evan-
gelical?
Your Ritualists prefer the Church for
spouse!"

She speaks.

"I have a story to relate.
There was a parish-priest, my father knew,
Elderly, poor: I used to pity him
Before I learned what woes are pity- 70
worth.
Elderly was grown old now, scanty means
Were straitening fast to poverty, beside
The ailments which await in such a case.
Limited every way, a perfect man
Within the bounds built up and up since
birth
Breast-high about him till the outside
world
Was blank save o'erhead one blue bit of
sky —

- Faith: he had faith in dogma, small or great,
 As in the fact that if he clave his skull
 He'd find a brain there: who proves such a fact
 No falsehood by experiment at price
 Of soul and body? The one rule of life
 Delivered him in childhood was '*Obeys Labour!*' He had obeyed and laboured
 — tame,
 True to the mill-track blinked on from above.
 Some scholarship he may have gained in youth:
- 10 Gone — dropt or flung behind. Some blossom-flake,
 Spring's boon, descends on every vernal head,
 I used to think; but January joins
 December, as his year had known no May
 Trouble its snow-deposit, — cold and old!
 I heard it was his will to take a wife,
 A helpmate. Duty bade him tend and teach —
 How? with experience null, nor sympathy
 Abundant, — while himself worked dogma dead,
 Who would play ministrant to sickness, age,
- 20 Womankind, childhood? These demand a wife.
 Supply the want, then! theirs the wife; for him —
 No coarsest sample of the proper sex
 But would have served his purpose equally
 With God's own angel, — let but knowledge match
 Her coarseness: zeal does only half the work.
 I saw this — knew the purblind honest drudge
 Was wearing out his simple blameless life,
 And wanted help beneath a burthen — borne
 To treasure-house or dust-heap, what cared I?
- 30 Partner he needed: I proposed myself,
 Nor much surprised him — duty was so clear!
 Gratitude? What for? Gain of Paradise —
 Escape, perhaps, from the dire penalty
 Of who hides talent in a napkin? No:
 His scruple was — should I be strong enough
 — In body? since of weakness in the mind,
 Weariness in the heart — no fear of these!
 He took me as these Arctic voyagers
 Take an aspirant to their toil and pain:
- 40 Can he endure them? — that's the point, and not
 — Will he? Who would not, rather!
 Whereupon,
- I pleaded far more earnestly for leave
 To give myself away, than you to gain
 What you called priceless till you gained the heart
 And soul and body! which, as beggars serve
 Extorted alms, you straightway spat upon.
 Not so my husband, — for I gained my suit,
 And had my value put at once to proof.
 Ask him! These four years I have died away
 In village-life. The village? Ugliness 54
 At best and filthiness at worst, inside.
 Outside, sterility — earth sown with salt
 Or what keeps even grass from growing fresh.
 The life? I teach the poor and learn, myself,
 That commonplace to such stupidity
 Is all-recondite. Being brutalised
 Their true need is brute-language, cheery grunts
 And kindly cluckings, no articulate
 Nonsense that's elsewhere knowledge.
 Tend the sick,
 Sickened myself at pig-perversity,
 Cat-craft, dog-snarling, — may be, snapping . . ."
- "Brief:
 You eat that root of bitterness called Man
 — Raw: I prefer it cooked, with social sauce!
 So, he was not the rich youth after all!
 Well, I mistook. But somewhere needs must be
 The compensation. If not young nor rich . . ."
- "You interrupt."
- "Because you've daubed enough
 Bistre for background. Play the artist now,
 Produce your figure well-relieved in front!
 The contrast — do not I anticipate?
 Though neither rich nor young — what then? 'Tis all
 Forgotten, all this ignobility,
 In the dear home, the darling word, the smile,
 The something sweeter . . ."
- "Yes, you interrupt.
 I have my purpose and proceed. Who lives
 With beasts assumes beast-nature, look and voice,
 And, much more, thought, for beasts think. Selfishness
 In us met selfishness in them, deserved
 Such answer as it gained. My husband, bent

- On saving his own soul by saving theirs, —
 They, bent on being saved if saving soul
 Included body's getting bread and cheese
 Somehow in life and somehow after
 death, —
- Both parties were alike in the same boat,
 One danger, therefore one equality.
 Safety induces culture: culture seeks
 To institute, extend and multiply
 The difference between safe man and man,
 Able to live alone now; progress means
 What but abandonment of fellowship?
 We were in common danger, still stuck
 close.
- No new books, — were the old ones mas-
 tered yet?
- No pictures and no music: these divert
 — What from? the staving danger off!
 You paint
- The waterspout above, you set to words
 The roaring of the tempest round you?
 Thanks!
- Amusement? Talk at end of the tired
 day
- Of the more tiresome morrow! I tran-
 scribed
- 20 The page on page of sermon-scrawlings —
 stopped
- Intellect's eye and ear to sense and sound —
 Vainly: the sound and sense would pene-
 trate
- To brain and plague there in despite of me
 Maddened to know more moral good were
 done
- Had we two simply sallied forth and
 preached
- I' the 'Green' they call their grimy, — I
 with twang
- Of long-disused guitar, — with cut and
 slash
- Of much-misvalued horsewhip he, — to
 bid
- The peaceable come dance, the peace-
 breaker
- 30 Pay in his person! Whereas — Heaven
 and Hell,
- Excite with that, restrain with this! So
 dealt
- His drugs my husband; as he dosed him-
 self,
- He drenched his cattle: and, for all my
 part
- Was just to dub the mortar, never fear
 But drugs, hand pestled at, have poisoned
 nose!
- Heaven he let pass, left wisely undescribed:
 As applicable therefore to the sleep
 I want, that knows no waking — as to
 what's
- Conceived of as the proper prize to tempt
 0 Souls less world-weary: there, no fault to
 find!
- But Hell he made explicit. After death,
 Life: man created new, ingeniously
- Perfect for a vindictive purpose now
 That man, first fashioned in beneficence,
 Was proved a failure; intellect at length
 Replacing old obtuseness, memory
 Made mindful of delinquent's bygone
 deeds
- Now that remorse was vain, which life-
 long lay
- Dormant when lesson might be laid to
 heart;
- New gift of observation up and down 50
 And round man's self, new power to appre-
 hend
- Each necessary consequence of act
 In man for well or ill — things obsolete —
 Just granted to supplant the idiocy
 Man's only guide while act was yet to
 choose,
- With ill or well momentarily its fruit;
 A faculty of immense suffering
 Conferred on mind and body, — mind,
 erewhile
- Unvisited by one compunctious dream
 During sin's drunken slumber, startled up, 60
 Stung through and through by sin's sig-
 nificance
- Now that the holy was abolished — just
 As body which, alive, broke down beneath
 Knowledge, lay helpless in the path to good,
 Failed to accomplish aught legitimate,
 Achieve aught worthy, — which grew old
 in youth,
- And at its longest fell a cut-down flower, —
 Dying, this too revived by miracle
 To bear no end of burthen now that
 back
- Supported torture to no use at all, 70
 And live imperishably potent — since
 Life's potency was impotent to ward
 One plague off which made earth a hell
 before.
- This doctrine, which one healthy view of
 things,
- One sane sight of the general ordinance —
 Nature, — and its particular object, —
 man, —
- Which one mere eye-cast at the character
 Of Who made these and gave man sense
 to boot,
- Had dissipated once and evermore, —
 This doctrine I have dosed our flock withal. 80
 Why? Because none believed it. *They*
 desire
- Such Heaven and dread such Hell, whom
 every day
- The alehouse tempts from one, a dog-fight
 bids
- Defy the other? All the harm is done
 Ourselves — done my poor husband who
 in youth
- Perhaps read Dickens, done myself who
 still
- Could play both Bach and Brahms. Such
 life I lead —

Thanks to you, knave! You learn its
quality —
Thanks to me, fool!"

He eyes her earnestly,
But she continues.

"— Life which, thanks once more
To you, arch-knave as exquisitest fool,
I acquiescingly — I gratefully
Take back again to heart! and hence this
speech

Which yesterday had spared you. Four
years long

Life — I began to find intolerable,
Only this moment. Ere your entry just,
10 The leap of heart which answered, spite
of me,

A friend's first summons, first provocative,
Authoritative, nay, compulsive call
To quit, though for a single day, my house
Of bondage — made return seem horrible.
I heard again a human lucid laugh
All trust, no fear; again saw earth pursue
Its narrow busy way amid small cares,
Smaller contentments, much weeds, some
few flowers, —

Never suspicious of a thunderbolt
20 Avenging presently each daisy's death.
I recognised the beech-tree, knew the
thrush
Repeated his old music-phrase, all right,
How wrong was I, then! But your entry
broke

Illusion, bade me back to bounds at
once.

I honestly submit my soul: which sprang
At love, and losing love lies signed and
sealed

'Failure.' No love more? then, no beauty
more

Which tends to breed love! Purify my
powers,

Effortless till some other world procure

30 Some other chance of prize! or, if none
be, —

Nor second world nor chance, — unde-
secrete

Die then this aftergrowth of heart, surmised
Where May's precipitation left June blank?
Better have failed in the high aim, as I,
Than vulgarly in the low aim succeed
As, God be thanked, I do not! Ugliness
Had I called beauty, falsehood — truth,
and you

— My lover! No — this earth's unchanged
for me,

By his enchantment whom God made the
Prince

40 O' the Power o' the Air, into a Heaven:
there is

Heaven, since there is Heaven's simulation
— earth.

I sit possessed in patience; prison-roof
Shall break one day and Heaven beam
overhead."

His smile is done with; he speaks bitterly.

"Take my congratulations, and permit
I wish myself had proved as teachable!
— Or, no! until you taught me, could I
learn

A lesson from experience ne'er till now
Conceded? Please you listen while I show
How thoroughly you estimate my worth 50
And yours — the immeasurably superior!

I
Believed at least in one thing, first to last, —
Your love to me: I was the vile and you
The precious; I abused you, I betrayed,
But doubted — never! Why else go my
way

Judas-like plodding to this Potter's Field
Where fate now finds me? What has
dinned my ear

And dogged my step? The spectre with
the shriek

'Such she was, such were you, whose pun-
ishment

Is just!' And such she was not, all the 60
while!

She never owned a love to outrage, faith
To pay with falsehood! For, my heart
knows this —

Love once and you love always. Why, it's
down

Here in the Album: every lover knows
Love may use hate but — turn to hate,
itself —

Turn even to indifference — no, indeed!
Well, I have been spell-bound, deluded
like

The witless negro by the Obeah-man
Who bids him wither: so, his eye grows
dim,

His arm slack, arrow misses aim and spear 70
Goes wandering wide, — and all the woe
because

He proved untrue to Fetish, who, he finds,
Was just a feather-phantom! I wronged
love,

Am ruined, — and there was no love to
wrong!"

"No love? Ah, dead love! I involve thy
ghost

To show the murderer where thy heart
poured life

At summons of the stroke he doubts was
dealt

On pasteboard and pretence! Not love,
my love?

I changed for you the very laws of life:
Made you the standard of all right, all 100
fair.

No genius but you could have been, no
 sage,
 No sufferer — which is grandest — for the
 truth!
 My hero — where the heroic only hid
 To burst from hiding, brighten earth one
 day!
 Age and decline were man's maturity;
 Face, form were nature's type: more grace,
 more strength,
 What had they been but just superfluous
 gauds,
 Lawless divergence? I have danced
 through day
 On tiptoe at the music of a word,
 Have wondered where was darkness gone
 as night
 Burst out in stars at brilliance of a smile!
 Lonely, I placed the chair to help me
 seat
 Your fancied presence; in companion-
 ship,
 I kept my finger constant to your glove
 Glued to my breast; then — where was
 all the world?
 I schemed — not dreamed — how I might
 die some death
 Should save your finger aching! Who
 creates
 Destroys, he only: I had laughed to scorn
 Whatever angel tried to shake my faith
 And make you seem unworthy: you your-
 self
 Only could do that! With a touch 'twas
 done.
 'Give me all, trust me wholly!' At the
 word,
 I did give, I did trust — and thereupon
 The touch did follow. Ah, the quiet smile,
 The masterfully-folded arm in arm,
 As trick obtained its triumph one time
 more!
 In turn, my soul too triumphs in defeat:
 Treason like faith moves mountains: love
 is gone!"

He paces to and fro, stops, stands quite
 close
 And calls her by her name. Then —

"God forgives:

Forgive you, delegate of God, brought
 near
 As never priests could bring him to this
 soul
 That prays you both — forgive me! I
 abase —
 Know myself mad and monstrous utterly
 In all I did that moment; but as God
 Gives me this knowledge — heart to feel
 and tongue
 To testify — so be you gracious too!
 Judge no man by the solitary work
 Of — well, they do say and I can believe —

The devil in him: his, the moment, — 40
 mine
 The life — your life!"

He names her name again.

"You were just — merciful as just, you
 were
 In giving me no respite: punishment
 Followed offending. Sane and sound
 once more,
 The patient thanks decision, promptitude,
 Which flung him prone and fastened him
 from hurt,
 Haply to others, surely to himself.
 I wake and would not you had spared one
 pang.
 All's well that ends well!"

Yet again her name.

"Had you no fault? Why must you 50
 change, forsooth,
 Parts, why reverse positions, spoil the play?
 Why did your nobleness look up to me,
 Not down on the ignoble thing confessed?
 Was it your part to stoop, or lift the low?
 Wherefore did God exalt you? Who
 would teach
 The brute man's tameness and intelligence
 Must never drop the dominating eye:
 Wink — and what wonder if the mad fit
 break,
 Followed by stripes and fasting? Sound
 and sane,
 My life, chastised now, couches at your 60
 foot.
 Accept, redeem me! Do your eyes ask
 'How?'
 I stand here penniless, a beggar; talk
 What idle trash I may, this final blow
 Of fortune fells me. I disburse, indeed,
 This boy his winnings? when each bubble-
 scheme
 That danced athwart my brain, a minute
 since,
 The worse the better, — of repairing
 straight
 My misadventure by fresh enterprise,
 Capture of other boys in foolishness
 His fellows, — when these fancies fade 70
 away
 At first sight of the lost so long, the found
 So late, the lady of my life, before
 Whose presence I, the lost, am also found
 Incapable of one least touch of mean
 Expedient, I who teemed with plot and
 wile —
 That family of snakes your eye bids flee!
 Listen! Our troublesomest dreams die
 off
 In daylight: I awake, and dream is —
 where?
 I rouse up from the past: one touch dispels

England and all here. I secured long
since
A certain refuge, solitary home
To hide in, should the head strike work
one day,
The hand forget its cunning, or perhaps
Society grow savage, — there to end
My life's remainder, which, say what fools
will,
Is or should be the best of life, — its fruit,
All tends to, root and stem and leaf and
flower.
Come with me, love, loved once, loved
only, come,
10 Blend loves there! Let this parenthetic
doubt
Of love, in me, have been the trial-test
Appointed to all flesh at some one stage
Of soul's achievement, — when the strong
man doubts
His strength. the good man whether good-
ness be,
The artist in the dark seeks, fails to find
Vocation, and the saint forswears his
shrine.
What if the lover may elude, no more
Than these, probative dark, must search
the sky
Vainly for love, his soul's star? But the
orb
20 Breaks from eclipse: I breathe again: I
love!
Tempted, I fell; but fallen — fallen lie
Here at your feet, see! Leave this poor
pretence
Of union with a nature and its needs
Repugnant to your needs and nature!
Nay,
False, beyond falsity you reprehend
In me, is such mock marriage with such
mere
Man-mask as — whom you witless wrong,
beside,
By that expenditure of heart and brain
He recks no more of than would yonder
tree
30 If watered with your life-blood: rains and
dews
Answer its ends sufficiently, while me
One drop saves — sends to flower and
fruit at last
The laggard virtue in the soul which else
Cumbers the ground! Quickened me!
Call me yours —
Yours and the world's — yours and the
world's and God's!
Yes, for you can, you only! Think!
Confirm
Your instinct! Say, a minute since, I
seemed
The castaway you count me, — all the
more
Apparent shall the angelic potency
40 Lift me from out perdition's deep of deeps

To light and life and love! — that's love
for you —
Love that already dares match might
with yours.
You loved one worthy, — in your esti-
mate, —
When time was; you described the un-
worthy taint,
And where was love then? No such test
could e'er
Try my love: but you hate me and revile;
Hatred, revilement — had you these to
bear
Would you, as I do, nor revile, nor hate,
But simply love on, love the more, per-
chance?
Abide by your own proof! *'Your love
was love:
Its ghost knows no forgetting!'* Heart of
mine,
Would that I dared remember! Too un-
wise
Were he who lost a treasure, did himself
Enlarge upon the sparkling catalogue
Of gems to her his queen who trusted
late
The keeper of her caskets! Can it be
That I, custodian of such relic still
As your contempt permits me to retain,
All I dare hug to breast is — *'How your
glove
Burst and displayed the long thin lily-
streak!'*
What may have followed — that is forfeit
now!
I hope the proud man has grown humble.
True —
One grace of humbleness absents itself —
Silence! yet love lies deeper than all
words,
And not the spoken but the speechless love
Waits answer ere I rise and go my way."
Whereupon, yet one other time the name.
To end she looks the large deliberate look,
Even prolongs it somewhat; then the soul
Bursts forth in a clear laugh that lengthens
on,
On, till — thinned, softened, silvered, one
might say
The bitter runnel hides itself in sand,
Moistens the hard grey grimly comic
speech.
"Ay — give the baffled angler even yet
His supreme triumph as he hales to shore
A second time the fish once 'scaped from
hook:
So artfully has new bait hidden old
Blood-imbrued iron! Ay, no barb's be-
neath
The gilded minnow here! You bid break
trust,

This time, with who trusts me, — not simply bid
 Me trust you, me who ruined but myself,
 In trusting but myself! Since, thanks to you,
 I know the feel of sin and shame, — be sure,
 I shall obey you and impose them both
 On one who happens to be ignorant
 Although my husband — for the lure is love,
 Your love! Try other tackle, fisher-friend!
 Repentance, expiation, hopes and fears,
 What you had been, may yet be, would I but
 Prove helpmate to my hero — one and all
 These silks and worsteds round the hook seduce
 Hardly the late torn throat and mangled tongue.
 Pack up, I pray, the whole assortment prompt!
 Who wonders at variety of wile
 In the Arch-cheat? You are the Adversary!
 Your fate is of your choosing: have your choice!
 Wander the world, — God has some end to serve
 Ere he suppress you! He waits: I endure,
 But interpose no finger-tip, forsooth,
 To stop your passage to the pit. Enough
 That I am stable, uninvolved by you
 In the rush downwards: free I gaze and fixed;
 Your smiles, your tears, prayers, curses move alike
 My crowned contempt. You kneel?
 Prostrate yourself!
 To earth, and would the whole world saw you there!"

Whereupon — "All right!" carelessly begins
 Somebody from outside, who mounts the stair,
 And sends his voice for herald of approach:
 Half in half out the doorway as the door
 Gives way to push..

"Old fellow, all's no good!

The train's your portion! Lay the blame on me!

I'm no diplomatist, and Bismarck's self
 Had hardly braved the awful Aunt at broach

Of proposition — so has world-repute
 Preceded the illustrious stranger! Ah! —"

Quick the voice changes to astonishment,
 Then horror, as the youth stops, sees, and knows.

The man who knelt starts up from kneeling, stands
 Moving no muscle, and confronts the stare. 40
 One great red outbreak buries — throat and brow —
 The lady's proud pale queenliness of scorn:
 Then her great eyes that turned so quick, become
 Intenser: quail at gaze, not they indeed!

V.

It is the young man shatters silence first.
 "Well, my lord — for indeed my lord you are,
 I little guessed how rightly — this last proof
 Of lordship-paramount confounds too much
 My simple head-piece! Let's see how we stand
 Each to the other! how we stood i' the 50
 game
 Of life an hour ago, — the magpies, stile
 And oak-tree witnessed. Truth exchanged for truth —
 My lord confessed his four-years-old affair —
 How he seduced and then forsook the girl
 Who married somebody and left him sad.
 My pitiful experience was — I loved
 A girl whose gown's hem had I dared to touch
 My finger would have failed me, palsy-fixed.
 She left me, sad enough, to marry — whom?
 A better man, — then possibly not you! 60
 How does the game stand? Who is who and what
 Is what, o' the board now, since an hour went by?
 My lord's '*seduced, forsaken, sacrificed,*'
 Starts up, my lord's familiar instrument,
 Associate and accomplice, mistress-slave —
 Shares his adventure, follows on the sly:
 — Ay, and since 'bag and baggage' is a phrase —
 Baggage lay hid in carpet-bag belike,
 Was but unpadlocked when occasion came
 For holding council, since my back was 70
 turned,
 On how invent ten thousand pounds which, paid,
 Would lure the winner to lose twenty more,
 Beside refunding these! Why else allow
 The fool to gain them? So displays herself
 The lady whom my heart believed — oh, laugh!
 Noble and pure: whom my heart loved at once,
 And who at once did speak truth when she said
 'I am not mine now but another's' — thus

- Being that other's! Devil's-marriage, eh?
'My lie weds thine till lucre us do part?'
 But pity me the snobbish simpleton,
 You two aristocratic tip-top swells
 At swindling! Quits, I cry! Decamp
 content
 With skin I'm peeled of: do not strip
 bones bare —
 As that you could, I have no doubt at all!
 O you two rare ones! Male and female,
 Sir!
 The male there smirked, this morning,
'Come, my boy —
 10 *Out with it! You've been crossed in love,*
I think:
I recognise the lover's hangdog look;
Make a clean breast and match my confidence,
For, I'll be frank, I too have had my fling,
Am punished for my fault, and smart
enough!
Where now the victim hides her head, God
knows!'
 Here loomed her head life-large, the devil
 knew!
 Look out, Salvini! Here's your man, your
 match!
 He and I sat applauding, stall by stall,
 Last Monday — *'Here's Othello'* was our
 word,
 20 *'But where's Iago?'* Where? Why,
 there! And now
 The fellow-artist, female specimen —
 Oh, lady, you must needs describe your-
 self!
 He's great in art, but you — how greater
 still
 — (If I can rightly, out of all I learned,
 Apply one bit of Latin that assures
'Art means just art's concealment') — tower
 yourself!
 For he stands plainly visible henceforth —
 Liar and scamp: while you, in artistry
 Prove so consummate — or I prove per-
 haps
 30 So absolute an ass — that — either way —
 You still do seem to me who worshipped
 you
 And see you take the homage of this man
 Your master, who played slave and knelt,
 no doubt,
 Before a mistress in his very craft . . .
 Well, take the fact, I nor believe my eyes,
 Nor trust my understanding! Still you
 seem
 Noble and pure as when we had the talk
 Under the tower, beneath the trees, that
 day.
 And there's the key explains the secret:
 down
 40 He knelt to ask your leave to rise a grade
 I' the mystery of humbug: well he may!
 For how you beat him! Half an hour ago,
 I held your master for my best of friends;
- And now I hate him! Four years since,
 you seemed
 My heart's one love: well, and you so re-
 main!
 What's he to you in craft?"
- She looks him through.
- "My friend, 'tis just that friendship have
 its turn —
 Interrogate thus me whom one, of foes
 The worst, has questioned and is answered
 by.
 Take you as frank an answer! answers 50
 both
 Begin alike so far, divergent soon
 World-wide — I own superiority
 Over you, over him. As him I searched,
 So do you stand seen through and through
 by me
 Who, this time, proud, report your crystal
 shrines
 A dewdrop, plain as amber prisons round
 A spider in the hollow heart his house!
 Nowise are you that thing my fancy feared
 When out you stepped on me, a minute
 since,
 — This man's confederate! no, you step 60
 not thus
 Obviously at beck and call to help
 At need some second scheme, and supple-
 ment
 Guile by force, use my shame to pinion me
 From struggle and escape! I fancied that!
 Forgive me! Only by strange chance, —
 most strange
 In even this strange world, — you enter
 now,
 Obtain your knowledge. Me you have
 not wronged
 Who never wronged you — least of all,
 my friend,
 That day beneath the College tower and
 trees,
 When I refused to say, — *'not friend but,*
love!'
 Had I been found as free as air when first
 We met, I scarcely could have loved you.
 No —
 For where was that in you which claimed
 return
 Of love? My eyes were all too weak to
 probe
 This other's seeming, but that seeming
 loved
 The soul in me, and lied — I know too
 late!
 While your truth was truth: and I knew at
 once
 My power was just my beauty — bear the
 word —
 As I must bear, of all my qualities,
 To name the poorest one that serves my
 soul

And simulates myself! So much in me
You loved, I know: the something that's
beneath

Heard not your call, — uncalled, no answer
comes!

For, since in every love, or soon or late
Soul must awake and seek out soul for soul,
Yours, overlooking mine then, would,
some day,

Take flight to find some other; so it
proved —

Missing me, you were ready for this man.
I apprehend the whole relation: his —

The soul wherein you saw your type of
worth

At once, true object of your tribute. Well
Might I refuse such half-heart's homage!
Love

Divining, had assured you I no more
Stand his participant in infamy
Than you — I need no love to recognise
As simply dupe and nowise fellow-cheat!
Therefore accept one last friend's-word, —
your friend's,

All men's friend, save a felon's. Ravel out
The bad embroilment, howsoever you
may,

Distribute as it please you praise or blame
To me — so you but fling this mockery
far —

Renounce this rag-and-feather hero-sham,
This poodle clipt to pattern, lion-like!
Throw him his thousands back, and lay to
heart

The lesson I was sent, — if man discerned
Ever God's message, — just to teach. I
judge —

To far another issue than could dream
Your cousin, — younger, fairer, as befits —
Who summoned me to judgment's exer-
cise.

I find you, save in folly, innocent.
And in my verdict lies your fate; at choice
Of mine your cousin takes or leaves you.
'Take!'

I bid her — for you tremble back to truth.
She turns the scale, — one touch of the
pure hand

Shall so press down, imprison past relapse
Farther vibration 'twixt veracity —
That's honest solid earth — and falsehood,
theft

And air, that's one illusive emptiness!
That reptile capture you? I conquered
him:

You saw him cower before me. Have no
fear

He shall offend you farther! Spare to
spurn

Safe let him slink hence till some subtler
Eye

Than I, anticipate the snake — bruise head
Ere he bruise heel — or, wrier than the
first,

Some Adam purge earth's garden of its pest
Before the slaver spoil the Tree of Life!

"You! Leave this youth, as he leaves
you, as I

Leave each! There's caution surely ex-
tant yet

Though conscience in you were too vain
a claim.

Hence quickly! Keep the cash but leave ⁵⁰
unsoiled

The heart I rescue and would lay to heal
Beside another's! Never let her know

How near came taint of your companion-
ship!"

"Ah!" — draws a long breath with a new
strange look

The man she interpellates — soul a-stir
Under its covert, as, beneath the dust,

A coppery sparkle all at once denotes
The hid snake has conceived a purpose.

"Ah —
Innocence should be crowned with igno-
rance?"

Desirable indeed, but difficult! ⁶⁰

As if yourself, now, had not glorified
Your helpmate by imparting him a hint
Of how a monster made the victim bleed
Ere crook and courage saved her — hint,

I say, —
Not the whole horror, — that were need-
less risk, —

But just such inkling, fancy of the fact,
As should suffice to qualify henceforth
The shepherd, when another lamb would
stray,

For warning 'Ware the wolf!' No doubt
at all,

Silence is generosity, — keeps wolf ⁷⁰

Unhunted by flock's warder! Excellent,
Did — generous to me, mean — just to him!
But, screening the deceiver, lamb were
found

Outraging the deceitless! So, — he knows!
And yet, unharmed I breathe — perchance,
repent —

Thanks to the mercifully-politic!"

"Ignorance is not innocence but sin —
Witness yourself ignore what after-pangs

Pursue the plague-infected. Merciful
Am I? Perhaps! The more contempt, ⁸⁰
the less

Hatred; and who so worthy of contempt
As you that rest assured I cooled the spot
I could not cure, by poisoning, forsooth,
Whose hand I pressed there? Under-
stand for once

That, sick, of all the pains corroding me
This burnt the last and nowise least — the
need

Of simulating soundness. I resolved —

No matter how the struggle tasked weak
flesh —
To hide the truth away as in a grave
From — most of all — my husband: he
nor knows
Nor ever shall be made to know your part,
My part, the devil's part, — I trust, God's
part
In the foul matter. Saved, I yearn to save
And not destroy: and what destruction
like
The abolishing of faith in him, that's faith
In me as pure and true? Acquaint some
child
10 Who takes yon tree into his confidence,
That, where he sleeps now, was a murder
done,
And that the grass which grows so thick,
he thinks,
Only to pillow him is product' just
Of what lies festering beneath! 'Tis God
Must bear such secrets and disclose them.
Man?
The miserable thing I have become
By dread acquaintance with my secret —
you —
That thing had he become by learning
me —
The miserable, whom his ignorance
10 Would wrongly call the wicked: ignorance
Being, I hold, sin ever, small or great.
No, he knows nothing!"

"He and I alike
Are bound to you for such discreetness,
then.
What if our talk should terminate awhile?
Here is a gentleman to satisfy,
Settle accounts with, pay ten thousand
pounds
Before we part — as, by his face, I fear,
Results from your appearance on the scene.
Grant me a minute's parley with my friend
30 Which scarce admits of a third personage!
The room from which you made your entry
first
So opportunely — still untenanted —
What if you please return there? Just a
word
To my young friend first — then, a word
to you,
And you depart to fan away each fly
From who, grass-pillowed, sleeps so sound
at home!"

"So the old truth comes back! A whole-
some change, —
At last the altered eye, the rightful tone!
But even to the truth that drops disguise
40 And stands forth grinning malice which
but now
Whined so contritely — I refuse assent
Just as to malice. I, once gone, come
back?"

No, my lord! I enjoy the privilege
Of being absolutely loosed from you
Too much — the knowledge that your
power is null
Which was omnipotence. A word of
mouth,
A wink of eye would have detained me
once,
Body and soul your slave; and now,
thank God,
Your fawningest of prayers, your fright-
fulest
Of curses — neither would avail to turn
My footstep for a moment!"

"Prayer, then, tries
No such adventure. Let us cast about
For something novel in expedient: take
Command, — what say you? I profess
myself
One fertile in resource. Commanding,
then,
I bid — not only wait there, but return
Here, where I want you! Disobey and —
good!
On your own head the peril!"

"Come!" breaks in
The boy with his good glowing face.
"Shut up!
None of this sort of thing while I stand here!
— Not to stand that! No bullying, I beg!
I also am to leave you presently
And never more set eyes upon your face —
You won't mind that much; but — I
tell you frank —
I do mind having to remember this
For your last word and deed — my friend
who were!
Bully a woman you have ruined, eh?
Do you know, — I give credit all at once
To all those stories everybody told
And nobody but I would disbelieve:
They all seem likely now, — nay, certain,
sure!
I dare say you did cheat at cards that night
The row was at the Club: '*sauter la
coupe*' —
That was your 'cut' for which your friends
'cut' you;
While I, the booby, 'cut,' — acquaintance-
ship
With who so much as laughed when I said
'luck.'
I dare say you had bets against the horse
They doctored at the Derby; little doubt,
That fellow with the sister found you shirk
His challenge and did kick you like a ball;
Just as the story went about! Enough:
It only serves to show how well advised,
Madam, you were in bidding such a fool
As I, go hang. You see how the mere
sight
And sound of you suffice to tumble down

Conviction topsy-turvy: no, — that's false, —
 There's no unknowing what one knows;
 and yet
 Such is my folly that, in gratitude
 For . . . well, I'm stupid; but you seemed
 to wish
 I should know gently what I know, should
 slip
 Softly from old to new, not break my neck
 Between beliefs of what you were and are.
 Well then, for just the sake of such a wish
 To cut no worse a figure than needs must
 In even eyes like mine, I'd sacrifice
 Body and soul! But don't think danger
 -- pray! --
 Menaces either! He do harm to us?
 Let me say 'us' this one time! You'd
 allow
 I lent perhaps my hand to rid your ear
 Of some cur's yelping — hand that's for-
 tified,
 Into the bargain, with a horsewhip? Oh,
 One crack and you shall see how curs
 decamp!
 My lord, you know your losses and my
 gains.
 Pay me my money at the proper time!
 If cash be not forthcoming, — well, your-
 self
 Have taught me, and tried often, I'll en-
 gage,
 The proper course: I post you at the Club,
 Pillory the defaulter. Crack, to-day,
 Shall, slash, to-morrow, slice through flesh
 and bone!
 There, Madam, you need mind no cur, I
 think!"

"Ah, what a gain to have an apt no less
 Than grateful scholar! Nay, he brings to
 mind
 My knowledge till he puts me to the blush,
 So long has it lain rusty! Post my name!
 That were indeed a wheal from whip-
 cord! Whew!

I wonder now if I could rummage out
 — Just to match weapons — some old
 scorpion-scourge!

Madam, you hear my pupil, may applaud
 His triumph o'er the master. I — no
 more
 Bully, since I'm forbidden: but entreat —
 Wait and return — for my sake, no! but
 just
 To save your own defender, should he
 chance
 Get thracked thro' awkward flourish of
 his thong.
 And what if — since all waiting's weary
 work —
 I help the time pass 'twixt your exit now
 And entry then? for — pastime proper —
 here's

The very thing, the Album, verse and prose
 To make the laughing minutes launch
 away!

Each of us must contribute. I'll begin —
 'Hail, calm activity, salubrious spot!'

I'm confident I beat the bard, — for why?
 My young friend owns me an Iago — him
 Confessed, among the other qualities,
 A ready rhymers. Oh, he rhymed! Here
 goes!

— Something to end with 'horsewhip!' 50
 No, that rhyme

Beats me; there's 'cowslip,' 'boltsprit,'
 nothing else!

So, Tennyson take my benison, — verse
 for bard,

Prose suits the gambler's book best!
 Dared and done!"

Wherewith he dips pen, writes a line or
 two,

Closes and clasps the cover, gives the book,
 Bowing the while, to her who hesitates,
 Turns half away, turns round again, at last
 Takes it as you touch carrion, then retires.
 The door shuts fast the couple.

VI.

With a change
 Of his whole manner, opens out at once 60
 The Adversary.

"Now, my friend, for you!
 You who, protected late, aggressive grown,
 Brandish, it seems, a weapon I must 'ware!
 Plain speech in me becomes respectable
 Henceforth, because courageous; plainly,
 then —

(Have lash well loose, hold handle tight
 and light!)

Throughout my life's experience, you in-
 dulg'd

Yourself and friend by passing in review
 So courteously but now, I vainly search

To find one record of a specimen 70
 So perfect of the pure and simple fool

As this you furnish me. Ingratitude

I lump with folly, — all's one lot, — so —
 fool!

Did I seek you or you seek me? Seek?
 sneak

For service to, and service you would
 style —

And did style — godlike, scarce an hour
 ago!

Fool, there again, yet not precisely there
 First-rate in folly: since the hand you

kissed

Did pick you from the kennel, did plant
 firm

Your footstep on the pathway, did per- 80
 suade

Your awkward shambling to true gait and
 pace,

- Fit for the world you walk in. Once astrut
On that firm pavement which your cowardice
Was for renouncing as a pitfall, next
Came need to clear your brains of their conceit
They cleverly could distinguish who was who,
Whatever folk might tramp the thoroughfare.
Men, now — familiarly you read them off,
Each phyz at first sight! O you had an eye!
Who couched it? made you disappoint each fox
- 10 Eager to strip my gosling of his fluff
So 'golden as he cackled 'Goose trusts lamb?'
'Ay, but I saved you — wolf defeated fox —
Wanting to pick your bones myself!' then, wolf
Has got the worst of it with goose for once.
I, penniless, pay you ten thousand pounds
(— No gesture, pray! I pay ere I depart.)
And how you turn advantage to account
Here's the example. Have I proved so wrong
In my peremptory '*debt must be discharged?*'
- 20 O you laughed lovelily, were loth to leave
The old friend out at elbows — pooh, a thing
Not to be thought of! I must keep my cash,
And you forget your generosity!
Ha ha, I took your measure when I laughed
My laugh to that! First quarrel — nay, first faint
Pretence at taking umbrage — '*Down with debt,
Both interest and principal! — The Club,
Exposure and expulsion! — stamp me out!*'
That's the magnanimous magnificent
- 30 Renunciation of advantage! Well,
But whence and why did you take umbrage, Sir?
Because your master, having made you know
Somewhat of men, was minded to advance,
Expound you women, still a mystery!
My pupil potted with a cloud on brow,
A clod in breast: had loved, and vainly loved:
Whence blight and blackness, just for all the world
As Byron used to teach us boys. Thought I —
'Quick rid him of that rubbish! Clear the cloud,
40 And set the heart a-pulsing!' — heart, this time:
- 'Twas nothing but the head I doctored late
For ignorance of Man; now heart's to dose
Palsied by over-palpitation due
To Woman-worship — so, to work at once
On first awol of the patient's ache!
This morning you described your malady, —
How you dared love a piece of virtue — lost
To reason, as the upshot showed: for scorn
Fity repaid your stupid arrogance;
And, parting, you went two ways, she resumed
Her path — perfection, while forlorn you paced
The world that's made for beasts like you and me.
My remedy was — tell the fool the truth!
Your paragon of purity had plumped
Into these arms at their first outspread — '*fallen*
My victim,' she prefers to turn the phrase —
And, in exchange for that frank confidence,
Asked for my whole life present and to come —
Marriage: a thing uncovenanted for,
Never so much as put in question. Life — 6
Implied by marriage — throw that trifle in
And round the bargain off, no otherwise
Than if, when we played cards, because you won
My money you should also want my head!
That, I demurred to: we but played '*for love*' —
She won my love; had she proposed for stakes
'*Marriage,*' — why, that's for whist, a wiser game.
Whereat she raved at me, as losers will,
And went her way. So far the story's known,
The remedy's applied, no farther: which 7
Here's the sick man's first *honorarium* for —
Posting his medicine-monger at the Club!
That being, Sir, the whole you mean my fee —
In gratitude for such munificence
I'm bound in common honesty to spare
No droplet of the draught: so, — pinch your nose,
Pull no wry faces! — drain it to the dregs!
I say '*She went off*' — '*went off,*' you subjoin,
'*Since not to wedded bliss, as I supposed,
Sure to some convent: solitude and peace* 8
Help her to hide the shame from mortal view,
With prayer and fasting.' No, my sapient Sir!
Far wieslier, straightway she betook herself
To a prize-portent from the donkey-show

- Of leathern long-ears that compete for palm
In clerical absurdity: since he,
Good ass, nor practises the shaving-trick,
The candle-crotchet, nonsense which re-
pays
When you've young ladies congregant, —
but schools
The poor, — toils, moils and grinds the
mill nor means
To stop and munch one thistle in this
life
Till next life smother him with roses: just
The parson for her purpose! Him she
stroked
Over the muzzle; into mouth with bit,
And on to back with saddle, — there he
stood,
The serviceable beast who heard, believed
And meekly bowed him to the burden, —
borne
Off in a canter to seclusion — ay,
The lady's lost! But had a friend of mine
— While friend he was — imparted his
sad case
To sympathising counsellor, full soon
One cloud at least had vanished from his
brow.
'Don't fear!' had followed reassuringly —
'The lost will in due time turn up again,
Probably just when, weary of the world,
You think of nothing less than settling-
down
To country life and golden days, beside
A dearest best and brightest virtuousest
Wife: who needs no more hope to hold her
own
Against the naughty-and-repentant — no,
Than water-gruel against Roman punch!'
And as I prophesied, it proves! My
youth, —
Just at the happy moment when, subdued
To spooniness, he finds that youth fleets
fast,
That town-life tires, that men should drop
boys'-play,
That property, position have, no doubt,
Their exigency with their privilege,
And if the wealthy wed with wealth, how
dire
The double duty! — in, behold, there
beams
Our long-lost lady, form and face com-
plete!
And where's my moralising pupil now,
Had not his master missed a train by
chance?
But, by your side instead of whirled away,
How have I spoiled scene, stopped catas-
trophe,
Struck flat the stage-effect I know by
heart!
Sudden and strange the meeting — im-
proved?
- Bless you, the last event she hoped or
dreamed!
But rude sharp stroke will crush out fire
from flint —
Assuredly from flesh. *'Tis you?' 'My-*
self,'
'Changed?' 'Changeless.' 'Then, what's
earth to me?' 'To me
What's heaven?' 'So, — thine!' 'And
thine!' 'And likewise mine!'
Had laughed *'Amen'* the devil, but for me
Whose intermeddling hinders this hot haste,
And bids you, ere concluding contract, 54
pause —
Ponder one lesson more, then sign and seal
At leisure and at pleasure, — lesson's price
Being, if you have skill to estimate,
— How say you? — I'm discharged my
debt in full!
Since paid you stand, to farthing utter-
most,
Unless I fare like that black majesty
A friend of mine had visit from last Spring.
Coasting along the Cape-side, he's be-
calmed
Off an uncharted bay, a novel town
Untouched at by the trader: here's a 60
chance!
Out paddles straight the king in his canoe,
Comes over bulwark, says he means to
buy
Ship's cargo — being rich and having
brought
A treasure ample for the purpose. See!
Four dragons, stalwart blackies, guard the
same
Wrapped round and round: its hulls, a
multitude, —
Palm-leaf and cocoa-mat and goat's-hair
cloth
All duly braced about with bark and
board, —
Suggest how brave, 'neath coat, must ker-
nel be!
At length the peeling is accomplished, 70
plain
The casket opens out its core, and lo
— A brand-new British silver sixpence —
bid
That's ample for the Bank, — thinks
majesty!
You are the Captain; call my sixpence
cracked
Or copper; *'what I've said is calumny;*
The lady's spotless!' Then, I'll prove my
words,
Or make you prove them true as truth —
yourself,
Here, on the instant! I'll not mince my
speech,
Things at this issue. When she enters,
then,
Make love to her! No talk of marriage 80
now —

The point-blank bare proposal! Pick no phrase —

Prevent all misconception! Soon you'll see
How different the tactics when she deals
With an instructed man, no longer boy
Who blushes like a booby. Woman's wit!
Man, since you have instruction, blush no more!

Such your five minutes' profit by my pains,
'Tis simply now — demand and be possessed!

Which means — you may possess — may strip the tree

10 Of fruit desirable to make one wise.

More I nor wish nor want: your act's your act,

My teaching is but — there's the fruit to pluck

Or let alone at pleasure. Next advance
In knowledge were beyond you! Don't expect

I bid a novice — pluck, suck, send sky-high

Such fruit, once taught that neither crab nor sloe

Falls readier prey to who but robs a hedge,
Than this gold apple to my Hercules.

Were you no novice but proficient — then,

20 Then, truly, I might prompt you — Touch and taste,

Try flavour and be tired as soon as I!

Toss on the prize to greedy mouths agape,
Betake yours, sobered as the satiate grow,

To wise man's solid meal of house and land,
Consols and cousin! but my boy, my boy,
Such lore's above you!

Here's the lady back!

So, Madam, you have conned the Album-page

And come to thank its last contributor?

How kind and condescending! I retire

30 A moment, lest I spoil the interview,
And mar my own endeavour to make friends —

You with him, him with you, and both with me!

If I succeed — permit me to inquire

Five minutes hence! Friends bid good-bye, you know."

And out he goes.

VII.

She, face, form, bearing, one
Superb composure —

"He has told you all?

Yes, he has told you all, your silence says —
What gives him, as he thinks, the mastery

Over my body and my soul! — has told

40 That instance, even, of their servitude

He now exacts of me? A silent blush!

That's well, though better would white ignorance

Beseem your brow, undesecrate before —
Ay, when I left you! I too learn at last

— Hideously learned as I seemed so late —
What sin may swell to. Yes, — I needed learn

That, when my prophet's rod became the snake

I fled from, it would, one day, swallow up —
Incorporate whatever serpentine

Falsehood and treason and unmanliness
Beslime earth's pavement: such the power

of Hell,

And so beginning, ends no otherwise

The Adversary! I was ignorant,
Blameworthy — if you will; but blame I take

Nowise upon me as I ask myself
— You — how can you, whose soul I seemed to read

The limpid eyes through, have declined so deep

Even with him for consort? I revolve
Much memory, pry into the looks and words

Of that day's walk beneath the College wall,

And nowhere can distinguish, in what gleams

Only pure marble through my dusky past,
A dubious cranny where such poison-seed

Might harbour, nourish what should yield to-day

This dread ingredient for the cup I drink.
Do not I recognise and honour truth

In seeming? — take your truth and for return,

Give you my truth, a no less precious gift?
You loved me: I believed you. I replied

— How could I other? *'I was not my own.'*

— No longer had the eyes to see, the ears
To hear, the mind to judge, since heart and soul

Now were another's. My own right in me,
For well or ill, consigned away — my face

Fronted the honest path, deflection whence
Had shamed me in the furtive backward look

At the late bargain — fit such chapman's phrase! —

As though — less hasty and more provident —

Waiting had brought advantage. Not for me

The chapman's chance! Yet while thus 8.
much was true,

I spared you — as I knew you then — one more

Concluding word which, truth no less, seemed best

Buried away for ever. Take it now
Its power to pain is past! Four years —

that day —
Those limes that make the College avenue!

- I would that — friend and foe — by
miracle,
I had, that moment, seen into the heart
Of either, as I now am taught to see!
I do believe I should have straight assumed
My proper function, and sustained a soul,
Nor aimed at being just sustained myself
By some man's soul — the weaker
woman's-want!
So had I missed the momentary thrill
Of finding me in presence of a god,
But gained the god's own feeling when he
gives
Such thrill to what turns life from death
before.
'*Gods many and Lords many,*' says the
Book:
You would have yielded up your soul to me
— Not to the false god who has burned its
clay
In his own image. I had shed my love
Like Spring dew on the clod all flowery
thence,
Not sent up a wild vapour to the sun
That drinks and then disperses. Both of
us
Blameworthy, — I first meet my punish-
ment —
20 And not so hard to bear. I breathe again!
Forth from those arms' entwining leprosy
At last I struggle — uncontaminate:
Why must I leave *you* pressing to the breast
That's all one plague-spot? Did you
love me once?
Then take love's last and best return! I
think,
Womanliness means only motherhood;
All love begins and ends there, — roams
enough,
But, having run the circle, rests at home.
Why is your expiation yet to make?
30 Pull shame with your own hands from
your own head
Now, — never wait the slow envelopment
Submitted to by unelastic age!
One fierce throe frees the sapling: flake
on flake
Lull till they leave the oak snow-stupefied.
Your heart retains its vital warmth — or
why
That blushing reassurance? Blush, young
blood!
Break from beneath this icy premature
Captivity of wickedness — I warn
Back, in God's name! No fresh encroach-
ment here!
40 This May breaks all to bud — no Winter
now!
Friend, we are both forgiven! Sin no
more!
I am past sin now, so shall you become!
Meanwhile I testify that, lying once,
My foe lied ever, most lied last of all.
He, waking, whispered to your sense asleep
- The wicked counsel, — and assent might
seem;
But, roused, your healthy indignation
breaks
The idle dream-pact. You would die —
not dare
Confirm your dream-resolve, — nay, find
the word
That fits the deed to bear the light of day! 50
Say I have justly judged you! then fare-
well
To blushing — nay, it ends in smiles, not
tears!
Why tears now? I have justly judged,
thank God!"
- He does blush boy-like, but the man speaks
out,
— Makes the due effort to surmount him-
self.
- "I don't know what he wrote — how
should I? Nor
How he could read my purpose, which, it
seems,
He chose to somehow write — mistakenly
Or else for mischief's sake. I scarce
believe
My purpose put before you fair and plain 60
Would need annoy so much; but there's
my luck —
From first to last I blunder. Still, one
more
Turn at the target, try to speak my
thought!
Since he could guess my purpose, won't
you read
Right what he set down wrong? He
said — let's think!
Ay, so! — he did begin by telling heaps
Of tales about you. Now, you see — sup-
pose
Anyone told me — my own mother died
Before I knew her — told me — to his
cost! —
Such tales about my own dead mother: 70
why,
You would not wonder surely if I knew,
By nothing but my own heart's help, he
lied,
Would you? No reason's wanted in the
case.
So with you! In they burnt on me, his
tales,
Much as when madhouse-inmates crowd
around,
Make captive any visitor and scream
All sorts of stories of their keeper — he's
Both dwarf and giant, vulture, wolf, dog,
cat,
Serpent and scorpion, yet man all the same;
Sane people soon see through the gibberish! 80
I just made out, you somehow lived some-
where

- A 'life of shame — I can't distinguish
more —
Married or single — how, don't matter
much:
Shame which himself had caused — that
point was clear,
That fact confessed — that thing to hold
and keep.
Oh, and he added some absurdity
— That you were here to make me — ha,
ha, ha! —
Still love you, still of mind to die for you,
Ha, ha — as if that needed mighty pains!
Now, foolish as . . . but never mind
myself
- 10 — What I am, what I am not, in the eye
Of the world, is what I never cared for
much.
Fool then or no fool, not one single word
In the whole string of lies did I believe,
But this — this only — if I choke, who
cares? —
I believe somehow in your purity
Perfect as ever! Else what use is God?
He is God, and work miracles He can!
Then, what shall I do? Quite as clear,
my course!
They've got a thing they call their Laby-
rinth
- 20 I' the garden yonder: and my cousin
played
A pretty trick once, led and lost me deep
Inside the briery maze of hedge round
hedge;
And there might I be staying now, stock-
still,
But that I laughing bade eyes follow nose
And so straight pushed my path through
let and stop
And soon was out in the open, face all
scratched,
But well behind my back the prison-bars
In sorry plight enough, I promise you!
So here: I won my way to truth through
lies —
- 30 Said, as I saw light, — if her shame be
shame
I'll rescue and redeem her, — shame's no
shame?
Then, I'll avenge, protect — redeem myself
The stupidest of sinners! Here I stand!
Dear, — let me once dare call you so, —
you said
Thus ought you to have done, four years
ago,
Such things and such! Ay, dear, and what
ought I?
You were revealed to me: where's grati-
tude,
Where's memory even, where the gain of you
Discernible in my low after-life
- 40 Of fancied consolation? why, no horse
Once fed on corn, will, missing corn, go
munch
- Mere thistles like a donkey! I missed you,
And in your place found — him, made him
my love,
Ay, did I, — by this token, that he taught
So much beast-nature that I meant . . .
God knows
Whether I bow me to the dust enough! . . .
To marry — yes, my cousin here! I hope
That was a master-stroke! Take heart
of hers,
And give her hand of mine with no more
heart
Than now you see upon this brow I strike! 50
What atom of a heart do I retain
Not all yours? Dear, you know it!
Easily
May she accord me pardon when I place
My brow beneath her foot, if foot so deign,
Since uttermost indignity is spared —
Mere marriage and no love! And all this
time
Not one word to the purpose! Are you
free?
Only wait! only let me serve — deserve
Where you appoint and how you see the
good!
I have the will — perhaps the power — 60
at least
Means that have power against the world.
For time —
Take my whole life for your experiment!
If you are bound — in marriage, say —
why, still,
Still, sure, there's something for a friend
to do,
Outside? A mere well-wisher, under-
stand!
I'll sit, my life long, at your gate, you
know,
Swing it wide open to let you and him
Pass freely, — and you need not look,
much less
Fling me a '*Thank you — are you there,
old friend?*'
Don't say that even: I should drop like 70
shot!
So I feel now at least: some day, who
knows?
After no end of weeks and months and
years
You might smile '*I believe you did your
best!*'
And that shall make my heart leap — leap
such leap
As lands the feet in Heaven to wait you
there!
Ah, there's just one thing more! How
pale you look!
Why? Are you angry? If there's, after
all,
Worst come to worst — if still there some-
how be
The shame — I said was no shame, —
none, I swear! —

In that case, if my hand and what it holds, —

My name, — might be your safeguard now — at once —

Why, here's the hand — you have the heart! Of course —

No cheat, no binding you, because I'm bound,

To let me off probation by one day,

Week, month, year, lifetime! Prove as you propose!

Here's the hand with the name to take or leave!

That's all — and no great piece of news, I hope!"

"Give me the hand, then!" she cries hastily.

10 "Quick, now! I hear his footstep!"

Hand in hand

The couple face him as he enters, stops Short, stands surprised a moment, laughs away

Surprise, resumes the much-experienced man.

"So, you accept him?"

"Till us death do part!"

"No longer? Come, that's right and rational!

I fancied there was power in common sense,

But did not know it worked thus promptly. Well —

At last each understands the other, then? Each drops disguise, then? So, at supper-time

20 These masquerading people doff their gear, Grand Turk his pompous turban, Quaker-ess

Her stiff-starched bib and tucker, — make-believe

That only bothers when, ball-business done,

Nature demands champagne and *mayonnaise*.

Just so has each of us sage three abjured His and her moral pet particular

Pretension to superiority,

And, cheek by jowl, we henceforth munch and joke!

Go, happy pair, paternally dismissed

30 To live and die together — for a month, Discretion can award no more! Depart

From whatsoe'er the calm sweet solitude

Selected — Paris not improbably —

At month's end, when the honeycomb's left wax,

— You, daughter, with a pocketful of gold

Enough to find your village boys and girls

In duffel cloaks and hobnailed shoes from May

To — what's the phrase? — Christmas-come-never-mas!

You, son and heir of mine, shall re-appear Ere Spring-time, that's the ring-time, lose 40 one leaf,

And — not without regretful smack of lip

The while you wipe it free of honey-smear —

Marry the cousin, play the magistrate, Stand for the county, prove perfection's

pink —

Master of hounds, gay-coated dine — nor die

Sooner than needs of gout, obesity,

And sons at Christ Church! As for me, — ah me,

I abdicate — retire on my success,

Four years well occupied in teaching youth

My son and daughter the exemplary! 50

Time for me to retire now, having placed

Proud on their pedestal the pair: in turn, Let them do homage to their master!

You, —

Well, your flushed cheek and flashing eye proclaim

Sufficiently your gratitude: you paid

The *honorarium*, the ten thousand pounds

To purpose, did you not? I told you so!

And you, but, bless me, why so pale — so faint

At influx of good fortune? Certainly,

No matter how or why or whose the fault, 60 I save your life — save it, nor less nor more!

You blindly were resolved to welcome death

In that black boor-and-bumpkin-haunted hole

Of his, the prig with all the preachments! You

Installed as nurse and matron to the crones

And wenches, while there lay a world outside

Like Paris (which again I recommend)

In company and guidance of — first, this, Then all in good time some new

friend as fit —

What if I were to say, some fresh myself, 70

As I once figured? Each dog has his day, And mine's at sunset: what should old dog

do

But eye young litters' frisky puppyhood?

Oh I shall watch this beauty and this youth

Frisk it in brilliance! But don't fear! Discreet,

I shall pretend to no more recognise

My quondam pupils than the doctor nods

When certain old acquaintances may cross His path in Park, or sit down prim beside

His plate at dinner-table: tip nor wink 80

- Scares patients he has put, for reason
good,
Under restriction, — maybe, talked some-
times
Of douche or horsewhip to, — for why?
because
The gentleman would crazily declare
His best friend was — Iago! Ay, and
worse —
The lady, all at once grown lunatic,
In suicidal monomania vowed,
To save her soul, she needs must starve
herself!
They're cured now, both, and I tell no-
body.
- 10 Why don't you speak? Nay, speechless,
each of you
Can spare, — without unclasping plighted
troth, —
At least one hand to shake! Left-hands
will do —
Yours first, my daughter! Ah, it guards
— it gripes
The precious Album fast — and prudently!
As well obliterate the record there
On page the last: allow me tear the leaf!
Pray, now! And afterward, to make
amends,
What if all three of us contribute each
A line to that prelusive fragment, — help
- 20 The embarrassed bard who broke out to
break down
Dumbfounded at such unforeseen suc-
cess?
'Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot'
You begin — *place aux dames!* I'll
prompt you then!
'Here do I take the good the gods allot!'
Next you, Sir! What, still sulky? Sing,
O Muse!
*'Here does my lord in full discharge his
shot!'*
Now for the crowning flourish! mine shall
be . . .
- "Nothing to match your first effusion, mar
What was, is, shall remain your master-
piece!
- 30 Authorship has the alteration-itch!
No, I protest against erasure. Read,
My friend!" (she gasps out). "Read and
quickly read
'Before us death do part,' what made you
mine
And made me yours — the marriage-
licence here!
Decide if he is like to mend the same!"
- And so the lady, white to ghastliness,
Manages somehow to display the page
With left-hand only, while the right retains
The other hand, the young man's, —
dreaming-drunk
- 40 He, with this drench of stupefying stuff,
- Eyes wide, mouth open, — half the idiot's
stare
And half the prophet's insight, — holding
tight,
All the same, by his one fact in the world —
The lady's right-hand: he but seems to
read —
Does not, for certain; yet, how understand
Unless he reads?
- So, understand he does.
For certain. Slowly, word by word, she
reads
Aloud that licence — or that warrant, say.
- "One against two — and two that urge
their odds
To uttermost — I needs must try resource!" 50
Madam, I laid me prostrate, bade you spurn
Body and soul: you spurned and safely
spurned
So you had spared me the superfluous taunt
"Prostration means no power to stand erect,
Stand, trampling on who trampled — pros-
trate now!"
- So, with my other fool-foe: I was fain
Let the boy touch me with the buttoned foil,
And him the infection gains, he too must
needs
Catch up the butcher's cleaver. Be it so!
Since play turns earnest, here's my serious 60
fence.
He loves you; he demands your love: both
know
What love means in my language. Love
him then!
Pursuant to a pact, love pays my debt:
Therefore, deliver me from him, thereby
Likewise delivering from me yourself!
For, hesitate — much more, refuse consent —
I tell the whole truth to your husband.
Flat
Cards lie on table, in our gamesier-phrase!
Consent — you stop my mouth, the only
way.
- "I did well, trusting instinct: knew your 70
hand
Had never joined with his in fellowship
Over this pact of infamy. You known —
As he was known through every nerve of
me.
Therefore I 'stopped his mouth the only
way'
But my way! none was left for you, my
friend —
The loyal — near, the loved one! No —
no — no!
Threaten? Chastise? The coward would
but quail.
Conquer who can, the cunning of the
snake!
Stamp out his slimy strength from tail to
head,

And still you leave vibration of the tongue.
His malice had redoubled — not on me
Who, myself, choose my own refining
fire —

But on poor unsuspicious innocence;
And, — victim, — to turn executioner
Also — that feat effected, fork tongue
Had done indeed its office! Once snake's

'mouth' — how could mortal 'stop
it'?"

"So!"

A tiger-flash — yell, spring, and scream:
halloo!

10 Death's out and on him, has and holds him
— ugh!

But *ne trucidet coram populo*

Juvenis senem! Right the Horatian rule!

There, see how soon a quiet comes to pass!

VIII.

The youth is somehow by the lady's side.
His right-hand grasps her right-hand once
again.

Both gaze on the dead body. Hers the
word.

"And that was good but useless. Had I
lived

The danger was to dread: but, dying
now —

Himself would hardly become talkative,
20 Since talk no more means torture. Fools
— what fools

These wicked men are! Had I borne four
years,

Four years of weeks and months and days
and nights,

Inured me to the consciousness of life
Coiled round by his life, with the tongue to
ply, —

But that I bore about me, for prompt use
At urgent need, the thing that 'stops the
mouth'

And stays the venom? Since such need
was now

Or never, — how should use not follow
need?

Bear witness for me, I withdraw from
life

30 By virtue of the licence — warrant, say,
That blackens yet this Album — white
again,

Thanks still to my one friend who tears
the page!

Now, let me write the line of supplement,
As counselled by my foe there: 'each a
line!'"

And she does falteringly write to end.

"I die now through the villain who lies dead,
Righteously slain. He would have out-
raged me,

So, my defender slew him. God protect
The right! Where wrong lay, I bear wit-
ness now.

Let man believe me, whose last breath is 40
spent

In blessing my defender from my soul!"

And so ends the Inn Album.

As she dies,
Begins outside a voice that sounds like
song,

And is indeed half song though meant for
speech

Muttered in time to motion — stir of heart
That unsubduably must bubble forth

To match the fawn-step as it mounts the
stair.

"All's ended and all's over! Verdict
found

'Not guilty' — prisoner forthwith set free,
Mid cheers the Court pretends to discre- 50
gard!

Now Portia, now for Daniel, late severe,
At last appeased, benignant! 'This

young man —
Hem — has the young man's foibles but no

fault.
He's virgin soil — a friend must cultivate.

I think no plant called "love" grows wild —
a friend

May introduce, and name the bloom, the
fruit!

Here somebody dares wave a handker-
chief —

She'll want to hide her face with presently!
Good-bye then! 'Cigno fedel, cigno

fedel,
Addio!' Now, was ever such mistake — 60

Ever such foolish ugly omen? Pshaw!

Wagner, beside! 'Amo te solo, te
Solo amai!' That's worth fifty such!

But, mum, the grave face at the opened
door!"

And so the good gay girl, with eyes and
cheeks

Diamond and damask, — cheeks so white
erewhile

Because of a vague fancy, idle fear
Chased on reflection! — pausing, taps dis-
creet;

And then, to give herself a countenance,
Before she comes upon the pair inside, 70

Loud — the oft-quoted, long-laughed-over
line —

"Hail, calm acclivity, salubrious spot!"
Open the door!"

No: let the curtain fall!

PACCHIAROTTO

AND

HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER,

ET CETERA.

1876.

[Pacchiarotto, born Siena, 1474, was an insignificant painter, who once obtained a little credit for pictures really painted by Pacchia. He was a reformer and conspirator as well as an inferior artist.]

PROLOGUE.

I.

O the old wall here! How I could pass
Life in a long Midsummer day,
My feet confined to a plot of grass,
My eyes from a wall not once away!

II.

And lush and lithe do the creepers clothe
Yon wall I watch, with a wealth of green:
Its bald red bricks draped, nothing loth,
In lappets of tangle they laugh between.

III.

Now, what is it makes pulsate the robe?
10 Why tremble the sprays? What life
o'erbrims
The body, — the house, no eye can probe, —
Divined as, beneath a robe, the limbs?

IV.

And there again! But my heart may guess
Who tripped behind; and she sang per-
haps:
So, the old wall throbbed, and its life's
excess
Died out and away in the leafy wraps.

V.

Wall upon wall are between us: life
And song should away from heart to
heart.
I — prison-bird, with a ruddy strife
20 At breast, and a lip whence storm-notes
start —

VI.

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That's spirit: though cloistered fast,
soar free;
Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
Of the rueful neighbours, and — forth
to thee!

OF PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER.

I.

QUERY: was ever a quainter
Crotchet than this of the painter
Giacomo Pacchiarotto
Who took "Reform" for his motto?

II.

He, pupil of old Fungaio,
Is always confounded (heigho!)
With Pacchia, contemporaneous
No question, but how extraneous
In the grace of soul, the power
Of hand, — undoubted dower
Of Pacchia who decked (as *we* know,
My Kirkup! ¹) San Bernardino,
Turning the small dark Oratory
To Siena's Art-laboratory,
As he made its straitness roomy
And glorified its gloomy,
4 With Bazzi ² and Beccafumi ³
(Another heigho for Bazzi:
How people miscall him Razzi!)

III.

This Painter was of opinion
Our earth should be his dominion
Whose Art could correct to pattern
What Nature had slurred — the slattern!
And since, beneath the heavens,
Things lay now at sixes and sevens,
Or, as he said, *sopra-sotto* ⁴ —
5 Thought the painter Pacchiarotto
Things wanted reforming, therefore.
"Wanted it" — ay, but wherefore?
When earth held one so ready

¹ A well-known Englishman long resident in Florence.

² Italian painter of the fifteenth century.

³ Sienese painter of the sixteenth century.

⁴ Upside-down.

As he to step forth, stand steady
 In the middle of God's creation
 And prove to demonstration
 What the dark is, what the light is,
 What the wrong is, what the right is,
 What the ugly, what the beautiful,
 What the restive, what the dutiful,
 In Mankind profuse around him?
 Man, devil as now he found him,
 Would presently soar up angel
 At the summons of such evangel,
 And owe — what would Man *not* owe
 To the painter Pacchiarotto?
 Ay, look to thy laurels, Giotto!

IV.

But Man, he perceived, was stubborn,
 Grew regular brute, once cub born;
 And it stuck him as expedient —
 Ere he tried to make obedient
 The wolf, fox, bear and monkey,
 By piping advice in one key —
 That his pipe should play a prelude
 To something heaven-tinged not hell-
 hued,
 Something not harsh but docile,
 Man-liquid, not Man-fossil —
 Not fact, in short, but fancy.
 By a laudable necromancy
 He would conjure up ghosts — a circle
 Deprived of the means to work ill
 Should his music prove distasteful
 And pearls to the swine go wasteful.
 To be rent of swine — that *was* hard!
 With fancy he ran no hazard:
 Fact might knock him o'er the mazzard.¹

V.

So, the painter Pacchiarotto
 Constructed himself a grotto
 In the quarter of Stalloreggi —
 As authors of note allege ye.
 And on each of the whitewashed sides of it
 He painted — (none far and wide so fit
 As he to perform in fresco) —
 He painted nor cried *quiesco*
 Till he peopled its every square foot
 With Man — from the Beggar barefoot
 To the Noble in cap and feather:
 All sorts and conditions together.
 The Soldier in breastplate and helmet
 Stood frowningly — hail fellow well met —
 By the Priest armed with bell, book and
 candle
 Nor did he omit to handle
 The Fair Sex, our brave distemperer:
 Not merely King, Clown, Pope, Emperor —
 He diversified too his Hades
 Of all forms, pinched Labour and paid
 Ease,
 With as mixed an assemblage of Ladies.

¹ The head.

VI.

Which work done, dry, — he rested him,
 Cleaned pallet, washed brush, divested him
 Of the apron that suits *frescanti*,²
 And, bonnet on ear stuck jaunty,
 This hand upon hip well planted,
 That, free to wave as it wanted,
 He addressed in a choice oration
 His folk of each name and nation,
 Taught its duty to every station.
 The Pope was declared an arrant
 Impostor at once, I warrant.
 The Emperor — truth might tax him
 With ignorance of the maxim
 "Shear sheep but nowise flay them!"
 And the Vulgar that obey them,
 The Ruled, well-matched with the Ruling,
 They failed not of wholesome schooling
 On their knavery and their fooling.
 As for Art — where's decorum? Pooh-
 poohed it is
 By Poets that plague us with lewd ditties,
 And Painters that pester with nudities!

VII.

Now, your rater and debater
 Is baulked by a mere spectator
 Who simply stares and listens
 Tongue tied, while eye nor glistens
 Nor brow grows hot and twitchy,
 Nor mouth, for a combat itchy,
 Quivers with some convincing
 Reply — that sets him wincing?
 Nay, rather — reply that furnishes
 Your debater with just what burnishes
 The crest of him, all one triumph,
 As you see him rise, hear him cry "Humph!
 Convinced am I? This confutes me?
 Receive the rejoinder that suits me!
 Confutation of vassal for prince meet —
 Wherein all the powers that convince meet,
 And mash my opponent to mincemeat!"

VIII.

So, off from his head flies the bonnet,
 His hip loses hand planted on it,
 While t'other hand, frequent in gesture,
 Slinks modestly back beneath vesture,
 As, — hop, skip and jump, — he's along
 with
 Those weak ones he late proved so strong
 with!
 Pope, Emperor, lo, he's beside them,
 Friendly now, who late could not abide
 them,
 King, Clown, Soldier, Priest, Noble, Bur-
 gess;
 And his voice, that out-roared Boanerges,
 How minikin-mildly it urges
 In accents how gentled and gingered
 Its word in defence of the injured!

² Painters in fresco.

"O call him not culprit, this Pontiff!
 Be hard on this Kaiser ye won't if
 Ye take into 'con-si-der-ation
 What dangers attend elevation!
 The Priest — who expects him to descant
 On duty with more zeal and less cant?
 He preaches but rubbish he's reared in.
 The Soldier, grown deaf (by the mere din
 Of battle) to mercy, learned tipling
 10 And what not of vice while a stripling.
 The Lawyer — his lies are conventional.
 And as for the Poor Sort — why mention
 all
 Obstructions that leave barred and belted
 Access to the brains of each dolt-head?"

IX.

He ended, you wager? Not half! A
 bet?
 Precedence to males in the alphabet!
 Still, disposed of Man's A, B, C, there's X,
 Y, Z, want assistance, — the Fair Sex!
 How much may be said in excuse of —
 20 Those vanities — males see no use of —
 From silk shoe on heel to laced poll's-
 hood!
 What's their frailty beside our own false-
 hood?
 The boldest, most brazen of . . . trum-
 pets,
 How kind can they be to their dumb pets!
 Of their charms — how are most frank,
 how few venal!
 While as for these charges of Juvenal —
Quæ nemo dixisset in toto
Nisi (ædepol) ore illoto —
 He dismissed every charge with an
 "A page!"

X.

30 Then, cocking (in Scotch phrase) his cap
 a-gee,
 Right hand disengaged from the doublet
 — Like landlord, in house he had sub-let
 Resuming of guardianship gestion,
 To call tenants' conduct in question —
 Hop, skip, jump, to inside from outside
 Of chamber, he lords, ladies, louts eyed
 With such transformation of visage
 As fitted the censor of this age.
 No longer an advocate tepid
 40 Of frailty, but champion intrepid
 Of strength, not of falsehood but verity,
 He, one after one, with asperity
 Stripped bare all the cant-clothed abuses.
 Disposed of sophistic excuses,
 Forced folly each shift to abandon,
 And left vice with no leg to stand on.
 So crushing the force he exerted,
 That Man at his foot lay converted!

XI.

True — Man bred of paint-pot and mor-
 tar!

But why suppose folks of this sort are
 More likely to hear and be tractable
 Than folks all alive and, in fact, able
 To testify promptly by action
 Their ardour, and make satisfaction
 For misdeeds *non verbis sed factis*?
 "With folk all alive be my practice
 Henceforward! O mortar, paint-pot O
 Farewell to ye!" cried Pacchiarotto,
 "Let only occasion interpose!"

XII.

It did so: for, pat to the purpose
 60 Through causes I need not examine,
 There fell upon Siena a famine.
 In vain did the magistrates busily
 Seek succour, fetch grain out of Sicily,
 Nay, throw mill and bakehouse wide
 open —
 Such misery followed as no pen
 Of mine shall depict ye. Faint, fainter
 Waxed hope of relief: so, our painter,
 Emboldened by triumph of recency,
 How could he do other with decency
 70 Than rush in this strait to the rescue,
 Play schoolmaster, point as with fescue!
 To each and all slips in Man's spelling
 The law of the land? — slips now telling
 With monstrous effect on the city,
 Whose magistrates moved him to pity
 As, bound to read law to the letter,
 They minded their hornbook no better.

XIII.

I ought to have told you, at starting,
 80 How certain, who itched to be carting
 Abuses away clean and thorough
 From Siena, both province and borough,
 Had formed themselves into a company
 Whose swallow could bolt in a lump any
 Obstruction of scruple, provoking
 The nicer throat's coughing and choking:
 Fit Club, by as fit a name dignified
 Of "Freed Ones" — "Bardotti" — which
 signified
 "Spare-Horses" that walk by the waggon
 The team has to drudge for and drag on. 90
 This notable club Pacchiarotto
 Had joined long since, paid scot and lot to,
 As free and accepted "Bardotto."
 The Bailiwick watched with no quiet eye
 The outrage thus done to society,
 And noted the advent especially
 Of Pacchiarotto their fresh ally.

XIV.

These Spare-Horses forthwith assem-
 bled:
 Neighed words whereat citizens trembled
 As oft as the chiefs, in the Square by 104
 The Duomo, proposed a way whereby

¹ Straw or stick used as a pointer in teaching
 reading.

The city were cured of disaster.
 "Just substitute servant for master,
 Make Poverty Wealth and Wealth Poverty,
 Unloose Man from overt and covert tie,
 And straight out of social confusion
 True Order would spring!" Brave illu-
 sion —
 Aims heavenly attained by means earthy!

xv.

Off to these at full speed rushed our
 worthy, —
 Brain practised and tongue no less tutored,
 10 In argument's armour accoutred, —
 Sprang forth, mounted rostrum and es-
 sayed
 Proposals like those to which "Yes" said
 So glibly each personage painted
 O' the wall-side wherewith you're ac-
 quainted.
 He harangued on the faults of the Baili-
 wick:
 "Red soon were our State-candle's paly
 wick,
 If wealth would become but interfluous,
 Fill voids up with just the superfluous;
 If ignorance gave way to knowledge
 20 — Not pedantry picked up at college
 From Doctors, Professors *et cetera* —
 (They say: '*kai ta loipa*' — like better a
 Long Greek string of *kappas, taus, lambdas*,
 Tacked on to the tail of each damned
 ass) —
 No knowledge we want of this quality,
 But knowledge indeed — practicality
 Through insight's fine universality!
 If you shout '*Bailiffs, out on ye all! Fie,*
Thou Chief of our forces, Amalfi,
 30 *Who shieldest the rogue and the clotpoll!*'
 If you pounce on and poke out, with what
 pole
 I leave ye to fancy, our Siena's
 Beast-litter of sloths and hyenas —"
 (Whoever to scan this is ill able
 Forgets the town's name's a dissyllable)
 "If, this done, ye did — as ye might —
 place
 For once the right man in the right place,
 If you listened to me . . ."

xvi.

At which last "If"
 There flew at his throat like a mastiff
 40 One Spare-Horse — another and another!
 Such outbreak of tumult and pother,
 Horse-faces a-laughing and fleering,
 Horse-voices a-mocking and jeering,
 Horse-hands raised to collar the caitiff
 Whose impudence ventured the late
 "If" —
 That, had not fear sent Pacchiarotto
 Off tramping, as fast as could trot toe,
 Away from the scene of discomfiture —

Had he stood there stock-still in a dumb
 fit — sure
 Am I he had paid in his person 50
 Till his mother might fail to know her son,
 Though she gazed on him never so wistful
 In the figure so tattered and triffling.
 Each mouth full of curses, each fist full
 Of cuffs — behold, Pacchiarotto,
 The pass which thy project has got to,
 Of trusting, nigh ashes still hot — tow!
 (The paraphrase — which I much need —
 is
 From Horace¹ "*per ignes incedis*.")

xvii.

Right and left did he dash helter-skelter 60
 In agonised search of a shelter.
 No purlieu so blocked and no alley
 So blind as allowed him to rally
 His spirits and see — nothing hampered
 His steps if he trudged and not scampered
 Up here and down there in a city
 That's all ups and downs, more the pity
 For folk who would outrun the constable.
 As last he stopped short at the one stable 70
 And sure place of refuge that's offered
 Humanity. Lately was coffered
 A corpse in its sepulchre, situate
 By St. John's Observance. "Habituate
 Thyself to the strangest of bedfellows,
 And, kicked by the live, kiss the dead
 fellows!"
 So Misery counselled the craven.
 At once he crept safely to haven
 Through a hole left unbricked in the struc-
 ture.
 Ay, Misery, in have you tucked your
 Poor client and left him conterminous 80
 With — pah — the thing fetid and ver-
 minous!
 (I gladly would spare you the detail,
 But History writes what I retail.)

xviii.

Two days did he groan in his domicile:
 "Good Saints, set me free and I promise
 I'll
 Abjure all ambition of preaching
 Change, whether to minds touched by teach-
 ing
 — The smooth folk of fancy, mere fig-
 ments
 Created by plaster and pigments, —
 Or to minds that receive with such rude- 90
 ness
 Dissuasion from pride, greed and lewdness,
 — The rough folk of fact, life's true speci-
 mens
 Of mind — '*haud in posse sed esse mens*'
 As it was, is, and shall be for ever
 Despite of my utmost endeavour.
 O live foes I thought to illumine,

¹ Odes, II. 1, 6.

Henceforth lie untroubled your gloom in !
I need my own light, every spark, as
I couch with this sole friend — a carcase !”

XIX.

Two days thus he maundered and
rambled;
Then, starved back to sanity, scrambled
From out his receptacle loathsome.
“A spectre !” — declared upon oath some
Who saw him emerge and (appalling
To mention) his garments a-crawling
to With plagues far beyond the Egyptian.
He gained, in a state past description,
A convent of monks, the Observancy.

XX.

Thus far is a fact : I reserve fancy
For Fancy's more proper employment :
And now she waves wing with enjoyment,
To tell ye how preached the Superior
When somewhat our painter's exterior
Was sweetened. He needed (no mincing
The matter) much soaking and rinsing,
20 Nay, rubbing with drugs odoriferous,
Till, rid of his garments pestiferous
And robed by the help of the Brotherhood
In odds and ends, — this gown and
t'other hood, —
His empty inside first well-garnished, —
He delivered a tale round, unvarnished.

XXI.

“Ah, Youth !” ran the Abbot's admon-
ishment,
“Thine error scarce moves my astonish-
ment.
For — why shall I shrink from asserting ? —
Myself have had hopes of converting
30 The foolish to wisdom, till, sober,
My life found its May grow October.
I talked and I wrote, but, one morning,
Life's Autumn bore fruit in this warning :
‘Let tongue rest, and quiet thy quill be !
Earth is earth and not heaven, and ne'er
will be.’
Man's work is to labour and heaven —
As best he may — earth here with heaven ;
'Tis work for work's sake that he's need-
ing :
Let him work on and on as if speeding
40 Work's end, but not dream of succeeding !
Because if success were intended,
Why, heaven would begin ere earth ended.
A Spare-Horse ? Be rather a thill-horse,¹
Or — what's the plain truth — just a mill-
horse !
Earth's a mill where we grind and wear
mufflers :
A whip awaits shirkers and shufflers
Who slacken their pace, sick of lugging
At what don't advance for their tugging.
¹ Thill = shaft.

Though round goes the mill, we must still
post

On and on as if moving the mill-post. 9
So, grind away, mouth-wise and pen-wise,
Do all that we can to make men wise !
And if men prefer to be foolish,
Ourselves have proved horse-like not mu-
lish :

Sent grist, a good sackful, to hopper,
And worked as the Master thought proper.
Tongue I wag, pen I ply, who'am Abbot ;
Stick thou, Son, to daub-brush and dab-
pot !

But, soft ! I scratch hard on the scab hot ?
Though cured of thy plague, there may 50
linger

A pimple I fray with rough finger ?
So soon could my homily transmute
Thy brass into gold ? Why, the man's
mute !”

XXII.

“Ay, Father, I'm mute with admiring
How Nature's indulgence untiring
Still bids us turn deaf ear to Reason's
Best rhetoric — clutch at all seasons
And hold fast to what's proved untenable !
Thy maxim is — Man's not amenable
To argument : whereof by consequence — 70
Thine arguments reach me : a non-se-
quence !

Yet blush not discouraged, O Father !
I stand unconverted, the rather
That nowise I need a conversion.
No live man (I cap thy assertion)
By argument ever could take hold
Of me. 'Twas the dead thing, the clay-
cold,

Which grinned ‘Art thou so in a hurry
That out of warm light thou must scurry
And join me down here in the dungeon 80
Because, above, one's Jack and one — John,
One's swift in the race, one — a hobbler,
One's a crowned king, and one — a capped
cobble,

Rich and poor, sage and fool, virtuous,
vicious ?

Why complain ? Art thou so unsuspicious
That all's for an hour of essaying
Who's fit and who's unfit for playing
His part in the after-construction
— Heaven's Piece whereof Earth's the
Induction ?

Things rarely go smooth at Rehearsal. 90
Wait patient the change universal,
And act, and let act, in existence !
For, as thou art clapped hence or hissed
hence,

Thou hast thy promotion or otherwise.
And why must wise thou have thy brother
wise

Because in rehearsal thy cue be
To shine by the side of a booby ?
No polishing garnet to ruby !

All's well that ends well — through Art's
magic

Some end, whether comic or tragic,
The Artist has purposed, be certain!
Explained at the fall of the curtain —
In showing thy wisdom at odds with
That folly: he tries men and gods with
No problem for weak wits to solve meant,
But one worth such Author's evolvment.
So, back nor disturb play's production
10 By giving thy brother instruction
To throw up his fool's-part allotted!
Lest haply thyself prove besotted
When stript, for thy pains, of that costume
Of sage, which has bred the imposhume
I prick to relieve thee of, — Vasily!

XXIII.

"So, Father, behold me in sanity!
I'm back to the palette and mahlstick:
And as for Man — let each and all stick
To what was prescribed them at starting!
20 Once planted as fools — no departing
From folly one inch, *saeculorum*
In *saecula*! Pass me the jorum,
And push me the platter — my stomach
Retains, through its fasting, still some
ache —
And then, with your kind *Benedicite*,
Good-bye!"

XXIV.

I have told with simplicity
My tale, dropped those harsh analytics,
And tried to content you, my critics,
Who greeted my early uprising!
30 I knew you through all the disguising,
Droll dogs, as I jumped up, cried "Hey-
day!"
This Monday is — what else but May-day?
And these in the drabs, blues and yellows,
Are surely the privileged fellows.
So, saltbox and bones, tongs and bellows,"
(I threw up the window) "your pleasure?"

XXV.

Then he who directed the measure —
An old friend — put leg forward nimbly,
"We critics as sweeps out your chimney!"
40 Much soot to remove from your flue, sir!
Who spares coal in kitchen an't you, sir!
And neighbours complain it's no joke, sir,
— You ought to consume your own smoke,
sir!"

XXVI.

Ah, rogues, but my housemaid suspects
you —
Is confident oft she detects you
In bringing more filth into my house
Than ever you found there! I'm pious
However: 'twas God made you dingy
And me — with no need to be stingy
50 Of soap, when 'tis sixpence the packet.

So, dance away, boys, dust my jacket,
Bang drum and blow life — ay, and rattle
Your brushes, for that's half the battle!
Don't trample the grass, — hocus-pocus
With grime my Spring snowdrop and cro-
cus, —

And, what with your rattling and tinkling,
Who knows but you give me an inkling
How music sounds, thanks to the jangle
Of regular drum and triangle?
Whereby, tap-tap, chink-chink, 'tis proven 60
I break rule as bad as Beethoven.

"That chord now — a groan or a grunt
is't?"

Schumann's self was no worse contrapunt-
ist.

No ear! or if ear, so tough-gristled —
He thought that he sung while he whistled!"

XXVII.

So, this time I whistle, not sing at all,
My story, the largess I fling at all
And every the rough there whose *aubade*¹
Did its best to amuse me, — nor so bad!
Take my thanks, pick up largess, and 7:
scamper

Off free, ere your mirth gets a damper!
You've Monday, your one day, your fun-
day,

While mine is a year that's all Sunday.
I've seen you, times — who knows how
many? —

Dance in here, strike up, play the zany,
Make mouths at the tenant, hoot warning
You'll find him decamped next May-morn-
ing;

Then scuttle away, glad to 'scape hence
With — kicks? no, but laughter and ha'-
pence!

Mine's freehold, by grace of the grand 80
Lord

Who lets out the ground here, — my land-
lord:

To him I pay quit-rent — devotion;
Nor hence shall I budge, I've a notion,
Nay, here shall my whistling and singing
Set all his street's echoes a-ringing
Long after the last of your number
Has ceased my front-court to encumber
While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle* us!
Troop, all of you — man or homunculus, 90
Quick march! for Xanthippe, my house-
maid,

If once on your pates she a souse made
With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis*
First comes to her hand — things were
more amiss!

I would not for worlds be your place in —
Recipient of slops from the basin!
You, Jack-in-the-Green, leaf-and-twig-
gishness

¹ Serenade.

Won't save a dry thread on your priggish-
ness!

While as for Quilp-Hop-o'-my-thumb
there,

Banjo-Byron that twangs the strum-
strum there —

He'll think, as the pickle he curses,
I've discharged on his pate his own verses!

"Dwarfs are saucy," says Dickens: so,
sauced in

Your own sauce, . . .¹

XXVIII.

But, back to my Knight of the Pencil,
Dismissed to his fresco and stencil!²

10 Whose story — begun with a chuckle,
And, throughout timed by raps of the
knuckle, —

To small enough purpose were studied
If it ends with crown cracked or nose
bloodied.

Come, critics, — not shake hands, excuse
me!

But — say have you grudged to amuse me
This once in the forty-and-over

Long years since you trampled my clover
And scared from my house-eaves each
sparrow

I never once harmed by that arrow

20 Of song, *karterotaton belos*,³
(Which Pindar declares the true *melos*!)
I was forging and filing and finishing,
And no whit my labours diminishing
Because, though high up in a chamber
Where none of your kidney may clamber
Your hullabaloo would approach me?
Was it "grammar" wherein you would
"coach" me —

You, — pacing in even that paddock

Of language allotted you *ad hoc*,

30 With a clog at your fetlocks, — you —
scorners

Of me free of all its four corners?

Was it "clearness of words which convey
thought?"

Ay, if words never needed enswathe aught
But ignorance, impudence, envy

And malice — what word-swathe would
then vie

With yours for a clearness crystalline?

But had you to put in one small line

Some thought big and bouncing — as nod-
dle

Of goose, born to cackle and waddle

40 And bite at man's heel as goose-wont is,

¹ No, please! For

"Who would be satirical

On a thing so very small?"

— *Printer's Devil*. [Note by R. B.]

² A thin plate with patterns cut out so as to
be transferred to a substance placed underneath
the plate.

³ The strongest dart.

⁴ Method.

Never felt plague its puny *os frontis* —
You'd know, as you hissed, spat and sput-
tered,

Clear cackle is easily uttered!

XXIX.

Lo, I've laughed out my laugh on this
mirth-day!

Beside, at week's end, dawns my birth-day,
That *hebdomo, hieron emar*⁵ —

(More things in a day than you deem
are!)

— *Tei gar Apollona chrusaora*

Pgeinato Leto.⁶ So, gray or ray

Betide me, six days hence, I'm vexed here 50

By no swoop, that's certain, till next year!

"Vexed?" — roused from what else were
insipid ease!

Leave snoring a-bed to Pheidippides!

We'll up and work! won't we, Euripides?

AT THE "MERMAID."

The figure that thou here seest . . . Tut!

Was it for gentle Shakespeare put?

B. JONSON. (*Adapted*.)

I.

I — "Next Poet?" No, my hearties,

I nor am nor fain would be!

Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,

Not one soul revolt to me!

I, forsooth, sow song-sedition?

I, a schism in verse provoke?

I, blown up by bard's ambition,

Burst — your bubble-king? You joke. 60

II.

Come, be grave! The sherris mantling

Still about each mouth, mayhap,

Breeds you insight — just a scantling —

Brings me truth out — just a scrap.

Look and tell me! Written, spoken,

Here's my life-long work: and where

— Where's your warrant or my token

I'm the dead king's son and heir? 70

III.

Here's my work: does work discover —

What was rest from work — my life?

Did I live man's hater, lover?

Leave the world at peace, at strife?

Call earth ugliness or beauty?

See things there in large or small?

Use to pay its Lord my duty?

Use to own a lord at all?

⁵ The seventh, a holy day.

⁶ On which the golden-sworded Apollo was
born of Latona.

IV.

Blank of such a record, truly
 Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
 Yours to take or leave; as duly,
 Mine remains the unproffered soul.
 So much, no whit more, my debtors —
 How should one like me lay claim
 To that largess elders, betters
 Sell you cheap their souls for — fame?

V.

Which of you did I enable
 Once to slip inside my breast,
 There to catalogue and label
 What I like least, what love best,
 Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
 Seek and shun, respect — deride?
 Who has right to make a rout of
 Rarities he found inside?

VI.

Rarities or, as he'd rather,
 Rubbish such as stocks his own:
 Need and greed (O strange) the Father
 Fashioned not for him alone!
 Whence — the comfort set a-strutting,
 Whence — the outcry "Haste, behold!
 Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
 Shows what brass we took for gold!"

VII.

Friends, I doubt not he'd display you
 Brass — myself call orichalc,¹ —
 Furnish much amusement; pray you
 Therefore, be content I baulk
 Him and you, and bar my portal!
 Here's my work outside: opine
 What's inside me mean and mortal!
 Take your pleasure, leave me mine!

VIII.

Which is — not to buy your laurel
 As last king did, nothing loth.
 Tale adorned and pointed moral
 Gained him praise and pity both.
 Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
 Forth by scores oaths, curses flew:
 Proving you were cater-cousins,
 Kith and kindred, king and you!

IX.

Whereas do I ne'er so little
 (Thanks to sherris) leave ajar
 Bosom's gate — no jot nor tittle
 Grow we nearer than we are.
 Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
 Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked, —
 Should I give my woes an airing, —
 Where's one plague that claims respect?

X.

Have you found your life distasteful?
 My life did, and does, smack sweet. 50
 Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
 Mine I saved and hold complete.
 Do your joys with age diminish?
 When mine fail me, I'll complain.
 Must in death your daylight finish?
 My sun sets to rise again.

XI.

What, like you, he proved — your Pil-
 grim —
 This our world a wilderness,
 Earth still grey and heaven still grim
 Not a hand there his might press, 60
 Not a heart his own might throb to,
 Men all rogues and women — say,
 Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
 Grown folk drop or throw away?

XII.

My experience being other,
 How should I contribute verse
 Worthy of your king and brother?
 Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
 I find earth not grey but rosy,
 Heaven not grim but fair of hue. 70
 Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
 Do I stand and stare? All's blue.

XIII.

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
 Rogues and fools enough: the more
 Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
 Some few honest to the core.
 Scan the near high, scout the far low!
 "But the low come close:" what then?
 Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
 Sciolists? My mate is Ben. 80

XIV.

Womankind — "the cat-like nature,
 False and fickle, vain and weak" —
 What of this sad nomenclature
 Suits my tongue, if I must speak?
 Does the sex invite, repulse so
 Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
 So becalm but to convulse so,
 Decking heads and breaking hearts?

XV.

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
 I "threw Venus"² (Ben, expound!) 90
 Never did I need importune
 Her, of all the Olympian round.
 Blessings on my benefactress!
 Cursings suit — for aught I know —
 Those who twitched her by the back tress,
 Tugged and thought to turn her — so!

¹ Bronze.² The best cast in dice (three sixes) is called Venus.

XVI.

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
 Thus I'm left with, — joy or grief
 Be the issue, — I abandon
 Hope or care you name me Chief!
 Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
 I? — who never once have wished
 Death before the day appointed:
 Lived and liked, not poohed and pished!

XVII.

10 'Ah, but so I shall not enter,
 Scroll in hand, the common heart —
 Stopped at surface: since at centre
 Song should reach *Welt-schmerz*, world-smart!"
 "Enter in the heart?" Its shelly
 Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft!
 Such song "enters in the belly
 And is cast out in the draught."

XVIII.

Back then to our sherris-brewage!
 "Kingship" quotha? I shall wait —
 Waive the present time: some new age . . .
 20 But let fools anticipate!
 Meanwhile greet me — "friend, good fellow,
 Gentle Will," my merry men!
 As for making Envy yellow
 With "Next Poet" — (Manners, Ben!)

HOUSE.

I.

SHALL I sonnet-sing you about myself?
 Do I live in a house you would like to see?
 Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
 "Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?"

II.

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
 30 "Take notice: this building remains on view,
 Its suites of reception every one,
 Its private apartment and bedroom too;

III.

"For a ticket, apply to the Publisher."
 No: thanking the public, I must decline.
 A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
 But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

IV.

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
 In a foreign land where an earthquake
 chanced:
 And a house stood gaping, nought to baulk
 40 Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

V.

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
 The inside gaped: exposed to day,
 Right and wrong and common and queer,
 Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

VI.

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed,
 no doubt!
 "Odd tables and chairs for a man of
 wealth!
 What a parcel of musty old books about!
 He smoked, — no wonder he lost his
 health!

VII.

"I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
 A brasier? — the pagan, he burned per- 51
 fumes!
 You see it is proved, what the neighbours
 guessed:
 His wife and himself had separate
 rooms."

VIII.

Friends, the goodman of the house at
 least
 Kept house to himself till an earthquake
 came:
 'Tis the fall of its frontage permits you
 feast
 On the inside arrangement you praise
 or blame.

IX.

Outside should suffice for evidence:
 And whoso desires to penetrate
 Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense —
 No optics like yours, at any rate! 60

X.

"Hoity toity! A street to explore,
 Your house the exception! 'With this
 same key
 Shakespeare unlocked his heart,' once
 more!"
 Did Shakespeare? If so, the less
 Shakespeare he!

SHOP.

So, friend, your shop was all your house!
 Its front, astonishing the street,
 Invited view from man and mouse
 To what diversity of treat
 Behind its glass — the single sheet!

II.

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese: 70
 Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog;
 Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese;
 Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog:
 Queer names, too, such a catalogue!

III.

I thought "And he who owns the wealth
Which blocks the window's vastitude,
— Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
On house itself, what scenes were
viewed!

IV.

"If wide and showy thus the shop,
What must the habitation prove?
The true house with no name a-top —
The mansion, distant one remove,
Once get him off his traffic-groove!

V.

"Pictures he likes, or books perhaps;
And as for buying most and best,
Commend me to these City chaps!
Or else he's social, takes his rest
On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI.

"Some suburb-palace, parked about
And gated grandly, built last year:
The four-mile walk to keep off gout;
Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer:
But then he takes the rail, that's clear.

VII.

"Or, stop! I wager, taste selects
Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
Retreat: the neighbourhood suspects
Little that he who rambles lone
Makes Rothschild tremble on his
throne!"

VIII.

Nowise! Nor Mayfair residence
Fit to receive and entertain, —
Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
From noise and crowd, from dust and
drain, —
Nor country-box was soul's domain!

IX.

Nowise! At back of all that spread
Of merchandize, woe's me, I find
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
The owner couched, his ware behind,
— In cupboard suited to his mind.

X.

For why? He saw no use of life
But, while he drove a roaring trade,
To chuckle "Customers are rife!"
To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
Yet zero in my profits made!

XI.

"This novelty costs pains, but — takes?
Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!

This article, no such great shakes,
Fizzes like wildfire? Underscore
The cheap thing — thousands to the
fore!"

XII.

'Twas lodging best to live most nigh
(Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
Wanted no outworld: "Hear and see
The bustle in the shop!" quoth he.

56

XIII.

My fancy of a merchant-prince
Was different. Through his wares we
groped
Our dorkling way to — not to mince
The matter — no black den where
moped
The master if we interloped!

XIV.

Shop was shop only: household-stuff?
What did he want with comforts there?
"Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and
rough,
So goods on sale show rich and rare!
'Sell and scud home' be shop's affair!"

60

XV.

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose!
Since somehow business must be done
At cost of trouble, — see, he throws
You choice of jewels, everyone,
Good, better, best, star, moon and sun!

XVI.

Which lies within your power of purse?
This ruby that would tip aright
Solomon's sceptre? Oh, your nurse
Wants simply coral, the delight
Of teething baby, — stuff to bite!

70

XVII.

Howe'er your choice fell straight you
took
Your purchase, prompt your money
rang
On counter, — scarce the man forsook
His study of the "Times," just swang
Till-ward his hand that stopped the
clang, —

XVIII.

Then off made buyer with a prize,
Then seller to his "Times" returned;
And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
Brightened apace, for rest was earned:
He locked door long ere candle burned.

80

XIX.

And whither went he? Ask himself,
Not me! To change of scene, I think.

Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
Nor all his music — money-chink.

XX.

Because a man has shop to mind
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give?

XXI.

10 "I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
Candlestick-maker much acquaints
His soul with song, or, haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute!

XXII.

But — shop each day and all day long!
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be — Christ,
how far!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. I.

I.

20 OVER the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there, outlying!
Roughness and smoothness,
Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness:
One reconcilment.

II.

30 Orbed as appointed,
Sister with brother
Joins, ne'er disjointed
One from the other.
All's lend-and-borrow;
Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
Angel weds devil!

III.

40 "Which things must — *why* be?"
Vain our endeavour!
So shall things *eye* be
As they were *seen*.
"Such things *should* be!"
Sage our desistence!
Rough-smooth be *made* be,
Mixed — man's existence!

IV.

Man — wise and foolish,
Lover and scorner,

Docile and mulish —
Keep each his corner!
Honey yet gall of it!
There's the life lying,
And I see all of it,
Only, I'm dying!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. II.

I.

COULD I but live again,
Twice my life over,
Would I once strive again?
Would not I cover
Quietly all of it —
Greed and ambition —
So, from the pall of it,
Pass to fruition?

II.

"Soft!" I'd say, "Soul mine!
These years and ten years,
Let the *bird* move mine
Digging out *decease*!
Let the *clazed* hawk soar,
Clean the sun's rays too!
Turf his *hay* *stack* *so*,
FORAGE my *finger's* *to*."

III.

Only a harper,
Quilt one or blow one,
Just a chancer.
I won't touch no one.
I am earth's native:
No rearranging it!
I be creative,
Chopping and changing it?

IV.

March, men, my fellows!
Those who *above* me,
(Distance so *below*)
Fancy you love me:
Those who, below me,
(Distance makes great so)
Free to *hate* me,
Fancy you hate so!

V.

Praising, reviling,
Worst men and best head,
Put me *among*,
Never arrested,
Wasteful, *unwasteful*,
March, in my *measure*,
Men, my *extraneous*!
I am the *future*.

VI.

So shall I fear thee,
Majesties yonder!

Mock-sun — more near thee,
 What is to wonder?
 So shall I love thee,
 Down in the dark, — lest
 Glowworm I prove thee,
 Star that now sparklest!

FEARS AND SCRUPLES.

I.

HERE'S my case. Of old I used to love him

This same unseen friend, before I knew:

Dream there was none like him, none above him, —

Wake to hope and trust my dream was true.

II.

Loved I not his letters full of beauty?

Not his actions famous far and wide?

Absent, he would know I vowed him duty;
 Present, he would find me at his side.

III.

Pleasant fancy! for I had but letters,

Only knew of actions by hearsay:

He himself was busied with my betters;

What of that? My turn must come some day.

IV.

"Some day" proving — no day! Here's the puzzle.

Passed and passed my turn is. Why complain?

He's so busied! If I could but muzzle
 People's foolish mouths that give me pain!

V.

"Letters?" (hear them!) "You a judge of writing?"

Ask the experts! — How they shake the head.

O'er these characters, your friend's inditing —

Call them forgery from A to Z!

VI.

"Actions? Where's your certain proof" (they bother)

"He, of all you find so great and good,

He, he only, claims this, that, the other

30 Action — claimed by men, a multitude?"

VII.

I can simply wish I might refute you,

Wish my friend would, — by a word,
 a wink, —

Bid me stop that foolish mouth, — you brute you!

He keeps absent, — why, I cannot think.

VIII.

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me,

One thing's sure enough: 'tis neither frost,

No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me

Thanks for truth — though falsehood, gained — though lost.

IX.

All my days, I'll go the softer, sadder,
 For that dream's sake! How forget 40

the thrill
 Through and through me as I thought

"The gladlier

Lives my friend because I love him still!"

X.

Ah, but there's a menace someone utters!
 "What and if your friend at home play

tricks?

Peep at hide-and-seek behind the shutters?
 Mean your eyes should pierce through

solid bricks?

XI.

"What and if he, frowning, wake you,
 dreamy?

Lay on you the blame that bricks — conceal?

Say '*At least I saw who did not see me,
 Does see now, and presently shall feel*'?" 50

XII.

"Why, that makes your friend a monster!"
 say you:

"Had his house no window? At first nod,

Would you not have hailed him?"

Hush, I pray you!

What if this friend happen to be —

God?

NATURAL MAGIC.

I.

ALL I can say is — I saw it!

The room was as bare as your hand.

I locked in the swarth little lady, — I swear,

From the head to the foot of her — well,
 quite as bare!

"No Nautch shall cheat me," said I, "taking my stand

At this bolt which I draw!" And this 60
 bolt — I withdraw it,

And there laughs the lady, not bare, but
embowered

With — who knows what verdure, o'er-
fruited, o'erflowered?

Impossible! Only — I saw it!

II.

All I can sing is — I feel it!

This life was as blank as that room;

I let you pass in here. Precaution, in-
deed?

Walls, ceiling and floor, — not a chance for
a weed!

Wide opens the entrance: where's cold
now, where's gloom?

No May to sow seed here, no June to re-
veal it,

10 Behold you enshrined in these blooms of
your bringing,

These fruits of your bearing — nay, birds
of your winging!

A fairy-tale! Only — I feel it!

MAGICAL NATURE.

I.

FLOWER — I never fancied, jewel — I
profess you!

Bright I see and soft I feel the outside
of a flower.

Save but glow inside and — jewel, I
should guess you,

Dim to sight and rough to touch: the
glory is the dower.

II.

Tou, forsooth, a flower? Nay, my love, a
jewel —

Jewel at no mercy of a moment in your
prime!

Time may fray the flower-face: kind be
time or cruel,

20 Jewel, from each facet, flash your laugh
at time!

BIFURCATION.

WE were two lovers; let me lie by her,
My tomb beside her tomb. On hers in-
scribe —

"I loved him; but my reason bade prefer
Duty to love, reject the tempter's bribe
Of rose and lily when each path diverged,
And either I must pace to life's far end
As love should lead me, or, as duty urged,
Plod the worn causeway arm-in-arm with
friend.

So, truth turned falsehood: *'How I
loathe a flower,*

30 *How prize the pavement!'* still caressed
his ear —

The deafish friend's — through life's day,
hour by hour.

As he laughed (coughing) *'Ay, it would
appear!'*

But deep within my heart of hearts there
hid

Ever the confidence, amends for all,
That heaven repairs what wrong earth's
journey did,

When love from life-long exile comes at
call.

Duty and love, one broad way, were the
best —

Who doubts? But one or other was to
choose.

I chose the darkling half, and wait the
rest

In that new world where light and dark-
ness fuse."

Inscribe on mine — "I loved her: love's
track lay

O'er sand and pebble, as all travellers
know.

Duty led through a smiling country, gay
With greensward where the rose and lily
blow.

'Our roads are diverse: farewell, love!'
said she;

*"Tis duty I abide by: homely sward
And not the rock-rough picturesque for me!
Above, where both roads join, I wait re-
ward.*

*Be you as constant to the path whereon
I leave you planted!'* But man needs
must move,

Keep moving — whither, when the star is
gone

Whereby he steps secure nor strays from
love?

No stone but I was tripped by, stumbling-
block

But brought me to confusion. Where I
fell,

There I lay flat, if moss disguised the rock,
Thence, if flint pierced, I rose and cried
'All's well!'

*Duty be mine to tread in that high sphere
Where love from duty ne'er disparts, I
trust,*

*And two halves make that whole, whereof —
since here*

*One must suffice a man — why, this one
must!'"*

Inscribe each tomb thus: then, some sage
acquaint

The simple — which holds sinner, & which
holds saint!

NUMPHOLEPTOS.

[Caught by a Nymph.]

STILL you stand, still you listen, still you
smile!

Still melts your moonbeam through me,
 white awhile,
 Softening, sweetening till sweet and soft
 Increase so round this heart of mine, that
 oft
 I could believe your moonbeam-smile has
 past
 The pallid limit, lies, transformed at last
 To sunlight and salvation — warms the
 soul
 It sweetens, softens! Would you pass
 that goal,
 Gain love's birth at the limit's happier
 verge,
 And, where an iridescence lurks, but urge
 The hesitating pallor on to prime
 Of dawn! — true blood-streaked, sun-
 warmth, action-time,
 By heart-pulse ripened to a ruddy glow
 Of gold above my clay — I scarce should
 know
 From gold's self, thus suffused! For
 gold means love.
 What means the sad slow silver smile
 above
 My clay but pity, pardon? — at the best,
 But acquiescence that I take my rest,
 Contented to be clay, while in your heaven
 The sun reserves love for the Spirit-Seven
 Companioning God's throne they lamp
 before,
 — Leaves earth a mute waste only
 wandered o'er
 By that pale soft sweet discompassioned
 moon
 Which smiles me slow forgiveness! Such
 the boon
 I beg? Nay, dear, submit to this — just
 this
 Supreme endeavour! As my lips now
 kiss
 Your feet, my arms convulse your shroud-
 ing robe,
 My eyes, acquainted with the dust, dare
 probe
 Your eyes above for — what, if born,
 would blind
 Mine with redundant bliss, as flash may
 find
 The inert nerve, sting awake the palsied
 limb,
 Bid with life's ecstasy sense overbrim
 And suck back death in the resurging
 joy —
 Love, the love whole and sole without
 alloy!
 Vainly! The promise withers! I employ
 Lips, arms, eyes, pray the prayer which
 finds the word,
 Make the appeal which must be felt, not
 heard,
 And none the more is changed your calm
 regard:
 Rather, its sweet and soft grow harsh and
 hard —
 Forbearance, then repulsion, then dis-
 dain.
 Avert the rest! I rise, see! — make, 40
 again
 Once more, the old departure for some
 track
 Untried yet through a world which brings
 me back
 Ever thus fruitlessly to find your feet,
 To fix your eyes, to pray the soft and
 sweet
 Which smile there — take from his new
 pilgrimage
 Your outcast, once your inmate, and as-
 suage
 With love — not placid pardon now —
 his thirst
 For a mere drop from out the ocean erst
 He drank at! Well, the quest shall be
 renewed.
 Fear nothing! Though I linger, un- 50
 enbued
 With any drop, my lips thus close. I go!
 So did I leave you, I have found you so,
 And doubtlessly, if fated to return,
 So shall my pleading persevere and earn
 Pardon — not love — in that same smile,
 I learn,
 And lose the meaning of, to learn once
 more,
 Vainly!
 What fairy track do I explore?
 What magic hall return to, like the gem
 Centuply-angled o'er a diadem?
 You dwell there, hearted; from your mid- 60
 most home
 Rays forth — through that fantastic world
 I roam
 Ever — from centre to circumference,
 Shaft upon coloured shaft: this crimsons
 thence,
 That purples out its precinct through the
 waste.
 Surely I had your sanction when I faced,
 Fared forth upon that untried yellow ray
 Whence I retrack my steps? They end
 to-day
 Where they began — before your feet,
 beneath
 Your eyes, your smile: the blade is shut
 in sheath,
 Fire quenched in flint; irradiation, late 70
 Triumphant through the distance, finds its
 fate,
 Merged in your blank pure sea, alike the
 source
 And tomb of that prismatic glow: divorce
 Absolute, all-conclusive! Forth I fared,
 Treading the lambent flamelet: little
 cared
 If now its flickering took the topaz tint,

- If now my dull-caked path gave sulphury
hint
Of subterranean rage — no stay nor stint
To yellow, since you sanctioned that I
bathe,
Burnish me, soul and body, swim and
swathe
In yellow license. Here I reek suffused
With crocus, saffron, orange, as I used
With scarlet, purple, every dye o' the bow
Born of the storm-cloud. As before, you
show
Scarce recognition, no approval, some
30 Mistrust, more wonder at a man become
Monstrous in garb, nay — flesh disguised
as well,
Through his adventure. Whatsoe'er be-
fell,
I followed, wheresoe'er it wound, that
vein
You authorised should leave your white-
ness, stain
Earth's sombre stretch beyond your mid-
most place
Of vantage, — trode that tinct whereof
the trace
On garb and flesh repel you! Yes, I
plead
Your own permission — your command,
indeed,
That who would worthily retain the love
' Must share the knowledge shrined those
eyes above,
Go boldly on adventure, break through
bounds
O' the quintessential whiteness that sur-
rounds
Your feet, obtain experience of each tinge
That bickers forth to broaden out, im-
pinge
Plainer his foot its pathway all distinct
From every other. Ah, the wonder,
linked
With fear, as exploration manifests
What agency it was first tipped the crests
Of unnamed wildflower, soon protruding
grew
30 Portentous mid the sands, as when his
hue
Betrays him and the burrowing snake
gleams through;
Till, last . . . but why parade more
shame and pain?
Are not the proofs upon me? Here again
I pass into your presence, I receive
Your smile of pity, pardon, and I leave . . .
No, not this last of times I leave you,
mute,
Submitted to my penance, so my foot
May yet again adventure, tread, from
source
To issue, one more ray of rays which
course
40 Each other, at your bidding, from the sphere
- Silver and sweet, their birthplace, down
that drear
Dark of the world, — you promise shall
return
Your pilgrim jewelled as with drops o'
the urn
The rainbow paints from, and no smatch
at all
Of ghastliness at edge of some cloud-pall
Heaven cowers before, as earth awaits the
fall
O' the bolt and flash of doom. Who
trusts your word
Tries the adventure: and returns — ab-
surd
As frightful — in that sulphur-steeped dis-
guise
Mocking the priestly cloth-of-gold, sole
prize
The arch-heretic was wont to bear away
Until he reached the burning. No, I say:
No fresh adventure! No more seeking
love
At end of toil, and finding, calm above
My passion, the old statuesque regard,
The sad petrific smile!
- O you — less hard
And hateful than mistaken and obtuse
Unreason of a she-intelligence!
You very woman with the pert pretence
To match the male achievement! Like
enough!
Ay, you were easy victors, did the rough
Straightway efface itself to smooth, the
gruff
Grind down and grow a whisper, — did
man's truth
Subdue, for sake of chivalry and ruth,
Its rapier-edge to suit the bulrush-spear
Womanly falsehood fights with! O that
ear
All fact pricks rudely, that thrice-super-
fine
Femininity of sense, with right divine
To waive all process, take result stain-free
From out the very muck wherein . . .
- Ah me!
The true slave's querculous outbreak! All
the rest
Be resignation! Forth at your behest
I fare. Who knows but this — the
crimson-quest —
May deepen to a sunrise, not decay
To that cold sad sweet smile? — which I
obey.

APPEARANCES.

I.

AND so you found that poor room dull,
Dark, hardly to your taste, my dear?

Its features seemed unbeautiful:

But this I know — 'twas there, not here,
You plighted troth to me, the word
Which — ask that poor room how it
heard.

II.

And this rich room obtains your praise
Unqualified, — so bright, so fair,
So all whereat perfection stays?

Ay, but remember — here, not there,
The other word was spoken! Ask

o This rich room how you dropped the
mask!

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER.

I.

No protesting, dearest!

Hardly kisses even!

Don't we both know how it ends?

How the greenest leaf turns serest,

Bluest outbreak — blankest heaven,

Lovers — friends?

II.

You would build a mansion,

I would weave a bower

— Want the heart for enterprise.

o Walls admit of no expansion:

Trellis-work may haply flower

Twice the size.

III.

What makes glad Life's Winter?

New buds, old blooms after.

Sad the sighing "How suspect

Beams would ere mid-Autumn splinter,

Roof-tree scarce support a rafter,

Walls lie wrecked?"

IV.

You are young, my princess!

I am hardly older:

Yet — I steal a glance behind.

Dare I tell you what convinces

Timid me that you, if bolder,

Bold — are blind?

V.

Where we plan our dwelling

Glooms a graveyard surely!

Headstone, footstone moss may
drape, —

Name, date, violets hide from spelling, —

But, though corpses rot obscurely,

Ghosts escape.

VI.

Ghosts! O breathing Beauty,

Give my frank word pardon!

What if I — somehow, somewhere —

Pledged my soul to endless duty

Many a time and oft? Be hard on

Love — laid there?

VII.

Nay, blame grief that's fickle,

Time that proves a traitor,

Chance, change, all that purpose
warps, —

Death who spares to thrust the sickle 50

Laid Love low, through flowers which
later

Shroud the corpse!

VIII.

And you, my winsome lady,

Whisper with like frankness!

Lies nothing buried long ago?

Are you — which shimmer mid the shady

Where moss and violet run to rankness —

Tombs or no?

IX.

Who taxes you with murder?

My hands are clean — or nearly! 60

Love being mortal needs must pass.

Repentance? Nothing were absurder.

Enough: we felt Love's loss severely;

Though now — alas!

X.

Love's corpse lies quiet therefore,

Only Love's ghost plays truant,

And warns us have in wholesome awe

Durable mansionry; that's wherefore

I weave but trellis-work, pursuant

— Life, to law. 70

XI.

The solid, not the fragile,

Tempts rain and hail and thunder.

If bower stand firm at Autumn's
close,

Beyond my hope, — why, boughs were
agile;

If bower fall flat, we scarce need
wonder

Wreathing — rose!

XII.

So, truce to the protesting,

So, muffled be the kisses!

For, would we but avow the truth,

Sober is genuine joy. No jesting! 80

Ask else Penelope, Ulysses —

Old in youth!

XIII.

For why should ghosts feel angered?

Let all their interference

Be faint march-music in the air!

"Up! Join the rear of us the vanguard!
Up, lovers, dead to all appearance,
Laggard pair!"

XIV.

The while you clasp me closer,
The while I press you deeper,
As safe we chuckle, — under breath,
Yet all the slyer, the jocosier, —
"So, life can boast its day, like leap-
year,
Stolen from death!"

XV.

10 Ah me — the sudden terror!
Hence quick — avaunt, avoid me,
You cheat, the ghostly flesh-dis-
guised!
Nay, all the ghosts in one! Strange
error!
So, 'twas Death's self that clipped and
coyed me,
Loved — and lied!

XVI.

Ay, dead loves are the potent!
Like any cloud they used you,
Mere semblance you, but substance
they!
Build we no mansion, weave we no tent!
20 Mere flesh — their spirit interfused you!
Hence, I say!

XVII.

All theirs, none yours the glamour!
Theirs each low word that won me,
Soft look that found me Love's, and
left
What else but you — the tears and
clamour
That's all your very own! Undone
me —
Ghost-bereft!

HERVÉ RIEL.¹

[Mr. Browning sent the hundred guineas
he received for this poem to the relief of
the starving French after the siege of Paris.
The story the poem records is true.]

I.

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen
hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French, — woe
to France!
30 And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter
through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a
shoal of sharks pursue,

¹ First published (*Cornhill Magazine*) in 1871.

Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-
Malo on the Rance,²
With the English fleet in view.

II.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the
victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his
great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
"Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbour, take 4
us quick — or, quicker still,
Here's the English can and will!"

III.

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk
and leapt on board;
"Why, what hope or chance have ships
like these to pass?" laughed they:
"Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the
passage scarred and scored, —
Shall the 'Formidable' here, with her
twelve and eighty guns,
Think to make the river-mouth by the
single narrow way,
Trust to enter — where 'tis ticklish for a
craft of twenty tons,
And with flow at full beside?
Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring? Rather say, 5
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay!"

IV.

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
"Here's the English at our heels; would
you have them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked to-
gether stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound?
Better run the ships aground!"
(Ended Damfreville his speech).
"Not a minute more to wait!
Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the
vessels on the beach!
France must undergo her fate..

V.

Give the word!" But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in
struck amid all these
— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate
— first, second, third?

² The river which runs into the English
Channel at St. Malo.

No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by
Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the
Croisickese.¹

VI.

And "What mockery or malice have we
here?" cries Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins?"² Are
you cowards, fools, or rogues?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who
took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow,
every swell
'Twixt the offing here and Grève where
the river disembogues?
Are you bought by English gold? Is it
love the lying's for?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot
of Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France? That
were worse than fifty Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth!
Sirs, believe me there's a way!
Only let me lead the line,
Have the biggest ship to steer,
Get this 'Formidable' clear,
Make the others follow mine,
And I lead them, most and least, by a
passage I know well,
Right to Solidor past Grève,
And there lay them safe and sound;
And if one ship misbehave, —
— Keel so much as grate the ground,
Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's
my head!" cries Hervé Riel.

VII.

Not a minute more to wait.
"Steer us in, then, small and great!
Take the helm, lead the line, save the
squadron!" cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage, as its inch of way were
the wide sea's profound!
See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that
grates the ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past.

¹ Native of Le Croisic, a village at the mouth
of the Loire.

² Natives of St. Malo.

All are harboured to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas "An-
chor!" — sure as fate,
Up the English come, — too late!

VIII.

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanch'd with
balm.
"Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance
As they cannonade away!
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding
on the Rance!"
How hope succeeds despair on each
Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
"This is Paradise for Hell!
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

IX.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.
'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my
name's not Damfreville."

X.

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point,
what is it but a run? —
Since 'tis ask and have, I may —
Since the others go ashore —
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I
call the Belle Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got, — noth-
ing more.

XI.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post

In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it
befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had
gone to wrack

All that France saved from the fight
whence England bore the bell.

Go to Paris: rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell

On the Louvre, face and flank!

"You shall look long enough ere you
come to Hervé Riel.

10 So, for better and for worse,

Hervé Riel, accept my verse!

In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once
more

Save the squadron, honour France, love
thy wife the Belle Aurore!

A FORGIVENESS.

I AM indeed the personage you know.

As for my wife, — what happened long
ago, —

You have a right to question me, as I
Am bound to answer.

("Son, a fit reply!")

The monk half spoke, half ground through
his clenched teeth,

At the confession-grate I knelt beneath.)

20 Thus then all happened, Father! Power
and place

I had as still I have. I ran life's race,
With the whole world to see, as only
strains

His strength some athlete whose prodigious
gains

Of good appal him: happy to excess, —
Work freely done should balance happi-
ness

Fully enjoyed; and, since beneath my roof
Housed she who made home heaven, in
heaven's behoof

I went forth every day, and all day long
Worked for the world. Look, how the
labourer's song

30 Cheers him! Thus sang my soul, at each
sharp throe

Of labouring flesh and blood — "She loves
me so!"

One day, perhaps such song so knit the
nerve

That work grew play and vanished. "I
deserve

Haply my heaven an hour before the
time!"

I laughed, as silverly the clockhouse-
chime

Surprised me passing through the postern-
gate

— Not the main entry where the menials
wait

And wonder why the world's affairs allow
The master sudden leisure. That was
how

I took the private garden-way for once. 44

Forth from the alcove, I saw start, en-
sconce

Himself behind the porphyry vase, a man.
My fancies in the natural order ran:

"A spy, — perhaps a foe in ambushade, —
A thief, — more like, a sweetheart of some
maid

Who pitched on the alcove for tryst per-
haps."

"Stand there!" I bid.

Whereat my man but wraps
His face the closelier with uplifted arm

Whereon the cloak lies, strikes in blind
alarm

This and that pedestal as, — stretch and 54
stoop, —

Now in, now out of sight, he thrids the
group

Of statues, marble god and goddess ranged
Each side the pathway, till the gate's
exchanged

For safety: one step thence, the street, you
know!

Thus far I followed with my gaze. Then,
slow,

Near on admiringly, I breathed again,
And — back to that last fancy of the
train —

"A danger risked for hope of just a word
With — which of all my nest may be the
bird

This poacher covets for her plumage, pray? 64
Carmen? Juana? Carmen seems too

gay

For such adventure, while Juana's grave
— Would scorn the folly. I applaud the

knave!

He had the eye, could single from my
brood

His proper fledgeling!"

As I turned, there stood
In face of me, my wife stone-still stone-
white.

Whether one bound had brought her, — at
first sight

Of what she judged the encounter, sure to
be

Next moment, of the venturous man and
me, —

Brought her to clutch and keep me from
my prey:

Whether impelled because her death no
day

Could come so absolutely opportune
As now at joy's height, like a year in June
Stayed at the fall of its first ripened rose:
Or whether hungry for my hate — who
knows? —

Eager to end an irksome lie, and taste
Our tingling true relation, hate embraced
By hate one naked moment: — anyhow
There stone-still stone-white stood my
wife, but now

The woman who made heaven within my
house.

Ay, she who faced me was my very spouse
As well as love — you are to recollect!

"Stay!" she said. "Keep at least one
soul unspewed

With crime, that's spotless hitherto —
your own!

Kill me who court the blessing, who alone
Was, am, and shall be guilty, first to last!
The man lay helpless in the toils I cast
About him, helpless as the statue there
Against that strangling bell-flower's bond-
age: tear

Away and tread to dust the parasite,
But do the passive marble no despite!
I love him as I hate you. Kill me! Strike
At one blow both infinitudes alike
Out of existence — hate and love! Whence
love?

That's safe inside my heart, nor will
remove

For any searching of your steel, I think.
Whence hate? The secret lay on lip, at
brink

Of speech, in a fierce tremble to escape,
At every form wherein your love took
shape,

At each new provocation of your kiss.
Kill me!"

We went in.

Next day after this,
I felt as if the speech might come. I
spoke —
Easily, after all.

"The lifted cloak
Was screen sufficient: I concern myself
Hardly with laying hands on who for
pelf —

Whate'er the ignoble kind — may prowl
and brave

Cuffing and kicking proper to a knave
Detected by my household's vigilance.
Enough of such! As for my love-ro-
mance —

I, like our good Hidalgo, rub my eyes
And wake and wonder how the film could
rise

Which changed for me a barber's basin
straight

Into — Mambrino's helm? I hesitate
Nowise to say — God's sacramental cup!
Why should I blame the brass which, bur-
nished up,

Will blaze, to all but me, as good as gold?
To me — a warning I was overbold

In judging metals. The Hidalgo waked
Only to die, if I remember, — staked

His life upon the basin's worth, and lost:
While I confess torpidity at most

In here and there a limb; but, lame and
halt,

Still should I work on, still repair my fault
Ere I took rest in death, — no fear at all!
Now, work — no word before the curtain
fall!"

The "curtain"? That of death on life, I
meant:

My "word," permissible in death's event,
Would be — truth, soul to soul; for,
otherwise,

Day by day, three years long, there had
to rise

And, night by night, to fall upon our
stage —

Ours, doomed to public play by heritage — 63
Another curtain, when the world, perforce

Our critical assembly, in due course
Came and went, witnessing, gave praise or
blame

To art-mimetic. It had spoiled the game
If, suffered to set foot behind our scene,
The world had witnessed how stage-king
and queen,

Gallant and lady, but a minute since
Enarming each the other, would evince
No sign of recognition as they took

His way and her way to whatever nook 70
Waited them in the darkness either side

Of that bright stage where lately groom
and bride

Had fired the audience to a frenzy-fit
Of sympathetic rapture — every whit

Earned as the curtain fell on her and me,
— Actors. Three whole years, nothing
was to see

But calm and concord; where a speech
was due

There came the speech: when smiles were
wanted too

Smiles were as ready. In a place like
mine,

Where foreign and domestic cares com- 84
bine,

There's audience every day and all day
long;

But finally the last of the whole throng
Who linger lets one see his back. For

her —
Why, liberty and liking: I aver,

Liking and liberty! For me — I breathed,
Let my face rest from every wrinkle
wreathed

- Smile-like about the mouth, unlearned my task
 Of personation till next day bade mask,
 And quietly betook me from that world
 To the real world, not pageant: there unfurled
 In 'work, its wings, my soul, the fretted power.
 Three years I worked, each minute of each hour
 Not claimed by acting: — work I may dispense
 With talk about, since work in evidence,
 Perhaps in history; who knows or cares?
- 10 After three years, this way, all unawares,
 Our acting ended. She and I, at close
 Of a loud night-feast, led, between two rows
 Of bending male and female loyalty,
 Our lord the king down staircase, while, held high
 At arm's length did the twisted tapers' flare
 Herald his passage from our palace, where
 Such visiting left glory evermore.
 Again the ascent in public, till at door
 As we two stood by the saloon — now blank
- 20 And disencumbered of its guests — there sank
 A whisper in my ear, so low and yet
 So unmistakable!
- "I half forget
 The chamber you repair to, and I want
 Occasion for one short word — if you grant
 That grace — within a certain room you called
 Our 'Study,' for you wrote there while I scrawled
 Some paper full of faces for my sport.
 That room I can remember. Just one short
 Word with you there, for the remembrance' sake!"
- 30 "Follow me thither!" I replied.
- We break
 The gloom a little, as with guiding lamp
 I lead the way, leave warmth and cheer,
 by damp
 Blind disused serpentining ways afar
 From where the habitable chambers are, —
 Ascend, descend stairs tunnelled through
 the stone, —
 Always in silence, — till I reach the lone
 Chamber sepulchred for my very own
 Out of the palace-quarry. When a boy,
 Here was my fortress, stronghold from
 annoy,
- 40 Proof-positive of ownership; in youth
 I garnered up my gleanings here — uncouth
- But precious relics of vain hopes, vain fears;
 Finally, this became in after years
 My closet of entrenchment to withstand
 Invasion of the foe on every hand —
 The multifarious herd in bower and hall,
 State-room, — rooms whatsoe'er the style,
 which call
 On masters to be mindful that, before
 Men, they must look like men and something more.
 Here, — when our lord the king's bestowment ceased
 To deck me on the day that, golden-fleeced,
 I touched ambition's height, — 'twas here, released
 From glory (always symbolled by a chain!)
 No sooner was I privileged to gain
 My secret domicile than glad I flung
 That last toy on the table — gazed where hung
 On hook my father's gift, the arquebuss —
 And asked myself "Shall I envisage thus
 The new prize and the old prize, when I reach
 Another year's experience? — own that each
 Equalled advantage — sportsman's —
 statesman's tool?
 That brought me down an eagle, this — a fool!"
- Into which room on entry, I set down
 The lamp, and turning saw whose rustled gown
 Had told me my wife followed, pace for pace.
 Each of us looked the other in the face.
 She spoke. "Since I could die now . . ."
- (To explain
 Why that first struck me, know — not
 once again
 Since the adventure at the porphyry's edge
 Three years before, which sundered like a wedge
 Her soul from mine, — though daily, smile to smile,
 We stood before the public, — all the while
 Not once had I distinguished, in that face
 I paid observance to, the faintest trace
 Of feature more than requisite for eyes
 To do their duty by and recognise:
 So did I force mine to obey my will
 And pry no further. There exists such
 skill, —
 Those know who need it. What physician
 shrinks
 From needful contact with a corpse? He drinks
 No plague so long as thirst for knowledge
 — not

- An idler impulse — prompts inquiry.
What,
And will you disbelieve in power to bid
Our spirit back to bounds, as though we
child
A child from scrutiny that's just and right
In manhood? Sense, not soul, accom-
plished sight,
Reported daily she it was — not how
Nor why a change had come to cheek and
brow.)
- “Since I could die now of the truth con-
cealed,
Yet dare not, must not die — so seems
revealed
The Virgin's mind to me — for death
means peace,
Wherein no lawful part have I, whose
lease
Of life and punishment the truth avowed
May haply lengthen, — let me push the
shroud
Away, that steals to muffle ere is just
My penance-fire in snow! I dare — I must
Live, by avowal of the truth — this
truth —
I loved you! Thanks for the fresh ser-
pent's tooth
That, by a prompt new pang more ex-
quisite
Than all preceding torture, proves me
right!
I loved you yet I lost you! May I go
Burn to the ashes, now my shame you
know?”
- I think there never was such — how ex-
press? —
Horror coquetting with voluptuousness,
As in those arms of Eastern workman-
ship —
Yataghan, kandjar, things that rend and
rip,
Gash rough, slash smooth, help hate so
many ways,
Yet ever keep a beauty that betrays
Love still at work with the artificer
Throughout his quaint devising. Why
prefer,
Except for love's sake, that a blade should
writhe
And bicker like a flame? — now play the
scythe
As if some broad neck tempted, — now
contract
And needle off into a fineness lacked
For just that puncture which the heart
demands?
Then, such adornment! Wherefore need
our hands
Enclose not ivory alone, nor gold
Roughened for use, but jewels? Nay,
behold!
- Fancy my favourite — which I seem to
grasp
While I describe the luxury. No asp
Is diapered more delicate round throat
Than this below the handle! These de-
note
— These mazy lines meandering, to end
Only in flesh they open — what intend
They else but water-purlings — pale con-
trast
With the life-crimson where they blend at
last?
And mark the handle's dim pellucid green,
Carved, the hard jadestone, as you pinch
a bean,
Into a sort of parrot-bird! He pecks
A grape-bunch; his two eyes are ruby-
specks
Pure from the mine: seen this way, —
glassy blank,
But turn them, — lo the inmost fire, that
shrank
From sparkling, sends a red dart right to
aim!
Why did I choose such toys? Perhaps the
game
Of peaceful men is warlike, just as men
War-wearied get amusement from that pen
And paper we grow sick of — statesfolk
tired
Of merely (when such measures are re-
quired)
Dealing out doom to people by three words,
A signature and seal: we play with swords
Suggestive of quick process. That is how
I came to like the toys described you now,
Store of which glittered on the walls and
strewn
The table, even, while my wife pursued
Her purpose to its ending. “Now you
know
This shame, my three years' torture, let me
go,
Burn to the very ashes! You — I lost,
Yet you — I loved!”
- The thing I pity most
In men is — action prompted by surprise
Of anger: men? nay, bulls — whose onset
lies
At instance of the firework and the goad! 70
Once the foe prostrate, — trampling once
bestowed, —
Prompt follows placability, regret,
Atonement. Trust me, blood-warmth
never yet
Betokened strong will! As no leap of
pulse
Pricked me, that first time, so did none
convulse
My veins at this occasion for resolve.
Had that devolved which did not then
devolve
Upon me, I had done — what now to do

Was quietly apparent.

"Tell me who
The man was, crouching by the porphyry
vase!"

"No, never! All was folly in his case,
All guilt in mine. I tempted, he com-
plied."

"And yet you loved me?"

"Loved you. Double-dyed
In folly and in guilt, I thought you gave
Your heart and soul away from me to slave
At statecraft. Since my right in you
seemed lost,
I stung myself to teach you, to your cost,
10 What you rejected could be prized beyond
Life, heaven, by the first fool I threw a
fond
Look on, a fatal word to."

"And you still
Love me? Do I conjecture well or ill?"

"Conjecture — well or ill! I had three
years
To spend in learning you."

"We both are peers
In knowledge, therefore: since three years
are spent
Ere thus much of yourself I learn — who
went
Back to the house, that day, and brought
my mind
To bear upon your action, uncombined
20 Motive from motive, till the dross, deprived
Of every purer particle, survived
At last in native simple hideousness,
Utter contemptibility, nor less
Nor more. Contemptibility — exempt
How could I, from its proper due — con-
tempt?"

I have too much despised you to divert
My life from its set course by help or hurt
Of your all-despicable life — perturb
The calm, I work in, by — men's mouths
to curb,

30 Which at such news were clamorous
enough —

Men's eyes to shut before my broidered
stuff

With the huge hole there, my emblazoned
wall

Blank where a scutcheon hung, — by,
worse than all,

Each day's procession, my paraded life
Robbed and impoverished through the
wanting wife

— Now that my life (which means — my
work) was grown

Riches indeed! Once, just this worth
alone

Seemed work to have, that profit gained
thereby
Of good and praise would — how reward-
ingly! —

Fall at your feet, — a crown I hoped to cast
Before your love, my love should crown
at last.

No love remaining to cast crown before,
My love stopped work now: but contempt
the more

Impelled me task as ever head and hand,
Because the very fiends weave ropes of
sand

Rather than taste pure hell in idleness.
Therefore I kept my memory down by
stress

Of daily work I had no mind to stay
For the world's wonder at the wife away.
Oh, it was easy all of it, believe,
For I despised you! But your words re-
trieve

Importantly the past. No hate assumed
The mask of love at any time! There
gloomed

A moment when love took hate's sem-
blance, urged

By causes you declare; but love's self
purged

Away a fancied wrong I did both loves
— Yours and my own: by no hate's help,
it proves,

Purgation was attempted. Then, you rise
High by how many a grade! I did de-
spise —

I do but hate you. Let hate's punishment
6 Replace contempt's! First step to which
ascent —

Write down your own words I re-utter you!
'I loved my husband and I hated — who

He was, I took up as my first chance, mere
Mud-ball to fling and make love foul with!

Here
Lies paper!"

"Would my blood for ink suffice!"

"It may: this minion from a land of spice,
Silk, feather — every bird of jewelled
breast —

This poignard's beauty, ne'er so lightly
prest

Above your heart there . . ." 7

"Thus?"

"It flows, I see.
Dip there the point and write!"

"Dictate to me!
Nay, I remember."

And she wrote the words.
I read them. Then — "Since love, in you,
affords

License for hate, in me, to quench (I say)
 Contempt — why, hate itself has passed
 away
 In vengeance — foreign to contempt. De-
 part
 Peacefully to that death which Eastern art
 Imbued this weapon with, if tales be true!
 Love will succeed to hate. I pardon you —
 Dead in our chamber!"

True as truth the tale.

She died ere morning; then, I saw how
 pale
 Her cheek was ere it wore day's paint-
 disguise,
 10 And what a hollow darkened 'neath her
 eyes,
 Now that I used my own. She sleeps, as
 erst
 Beloved, in this your church: ay, yours!

Immersed

In thought so deeply, Father? Sad, per-
 haps?
 For whose sake, hers or mine or his who
 wraps
 — Still plain I seem to see! — about his
 head
 The idle cloak, — about his heart (instead
 Of cuirass) some fond hope he may elude
 My vengeance in the cloister's solitude?
 Hardly, I think! As little helped his brow
 20 The cloak then, Father — as your grate
 helps now!

CENCIAJA.

[Cencigaga is a bundle of rags — a trifle.
 The Italian proverb may be translated
 thus: "Every poor creature will be press-
 ing into the company of his betters." See
 the "Browning Cyclopædia," p. 97.]

Ogni cencio vuol entrare in bucato.

— Italian Proverb.

MAY I print, Shelley, how it came to pass
 That when your Beatrice seemed — by
 lapse
 Of many a long month since her sentence
 fell —

Assured of pardon for the parricide, —
 By intercession of staunch friends, or, say,
 By certain pricks of conscience in the Pope
 Conniver at Francesco Cenci's guilt, —
 Suddenly all things changed and Clement
 grew

"Stern," as you state, "nor to be moved
 nor bent,

But said these three words coldly 'She
 must die;'

Subjoining 'Pardon? Paolo Santa Croce
 Murdered his mother also yestereve,
 And he is fled: she shall not flee at least!'

— So, to the letter, sentence was fulfilled?
 Shelley, may I condense verbosity

That lies before me, into some few words
 Of English, and illustrate your superb
 Achievement by a rescued anecdote,

No great things, only new and true beside?
 As if some mere familiar of a house

Should venture to accost the group at gaze
 Before its Titian, famed the wide world

through,
 And supplement such pictured master-
 piece

By whisper "Searching in the archives
 here,

I found the reason of the Lady's fate,
 And how by accident it came to pass

She wears the halo and displays the palm:
 Who, haply, else had never suffered — no,

Nor graced our gallery, by consequence."
 Who loved the work would like the little

news:

Who lauds your poem lends an ear to me
 Relating how the penalty was paid

By one Marchese dell' Oriolo, called
 Onofrio Santa Croce otherwise,

For his complicity in matricide
 With Paolo his own brother, — he whose

crime
 And flight induced "those three words —
 She must die.

Thus I unroll you then the manuscript.

"God's justice" — (of the multiplicity
 Of such communications extant still,

Recording, each, injustice done by God
 In person of his Vicar-upon-earth,

Scarce one but leads off to the self-same
 tune)

"God's justice, tardy though it prove per-
 chance,

Rests never on the track until it reach
 Delinquency. In proof I cite the case

Of Paolo Santa Croce."

Many times

The youngster, — having been importu-
 nate

That Marchesine Costanza, who remained
 His widowed mother, should supplant the

her
 Her elder son, and substitute himself
 In sole possession of her faculty,

And meeting just as often with rebuff, —
 Blinded by so exorbitant a lust

Of gold, the youngster straightway tasked
 his wits,

Casting about to kill the lady — thus.

He first, to cover his iniquity,
 Writes to Onofrio Santa Croce, then

Authoritative lord, acquainting him
 Their mother was contamination —

wrought
 Like hell fire in the beauty of their House

40

50

60

70

80

By dissoluteness and abandonment
 Or soul and body to impure delight.
 Moreover, since she suffered from disease,
 Those symptoms which her death made
 manifest

Hydroptic, he affirmed were fruits of sin
 About to bring confusion and disgrace
 Upon the ancient lineage and high fame
 O' the family, when published. Duty
 bound,

He asked his brother — what a son should
 do?

10 Which when Marchese dell' Oriolo
 heard

By letter, being absent at his land
 Oriolo, he made answer, this, no more:
 "It must behove a son, — things haply
 so, —

To act as honour prompts a cavalier
 And son, perform his duty to all three,
 Mother and brothers" — here advice
 broke off.

By which advice informed and fortified,
 As he professed himself — since bound by
 birth

20 To hear God's voice in primogeniture —
 Paolo, who kept his mother company
 In her domain Subiaco, straightway dared
 His whole enormity of enterprise
 And, falling on her, stabbed the lady dead;
 Whose death demonstrated her innocence,
 And happened, — by the way, — since
 Jesus Christ
 Died to save man, just sixteen hundred
 years.

Costanza was of aspect beautiful
 Exceedingly, and seemed, although in age
 Sixty about, to far surpass her peers

30 The coëtaneous dames, in youth and
 grace.

Done the misdeed, its author takes to
 flight,

Foiling thereby the justice of the world:
 Not God's however, — God, be sure,
 knows well

The way to clutch a culprit. Witness here!
 The present sinner, when he least expects,
 Snug-cornered somewhere i' the Basilicate,
 Stumbles upon his death by violence.

A man of blood assaults a man of blood
 And slays him somehow. This was after-
 ward:

40 Enough, he promptly met with his deserts,
 And, ending thus, permits we end with
 him,

And push forthwith to this important
 point —

His matricide fell out, of all the days,
 Precisely when the law-procedure closed
 Respecting Count Francesco Cenci's
 death

Chargeable on his daughter, sons and
 wife.

"Thus patricide was matched with matri-
 cide,"

A poet not inelegantly rhymed:

Nay, fratricide — those Princes Mas-
 simi! —

Which so disturbed the spirit of the Pope
 That all the likelihood Rome entertained
 Of Beatrice's pardon vanished straight,
 And she endured the piteous death.

Now see

The sequel — what effect commandment
 had

For strict inquiry into this last case,
 When Cardinal Aldobrandini (great
 His efficacy — nephew to the Pope)
 Was bidden crush — ay, though his very
 hand

Got soil i' the act — crime spawning every-
 where!

Because, when all endeavour had been
 used

To catch the aforesaid Paolo, all in vain —
 "Make perquisition" quoth our Emi-
 nence,

"Throughout his now deserted domicile!
 Ransack the palace, roof and floor, to find
 If haply any scrap of writing, hid
 In nook or corner, may convict — who
 knows? —

Brother Onofrio of intelligence
 With brother Paolo, as in brotherhood
 Is but too likely: crime spawns every-
 where."

And, every cranny searched accordingly,
 There comes to light — O lynx-eyed Car-
 dinal! —

Onofrio's unconsidered writing-scrap,
 The letter in reply to Paolo's prayer,
 The word of counsel that — things proving
 so,

Paolo should act the proper knightly part,
 And do as was incumbent on a son,
 A brother — and a man of birth, be sure!

Whereat immediately the officers
 Proceeded to arrest Onofrio — found
 At foot-ball, child's play, unaware of harm,
 Safe with his friends, the Orsini, at their
 seat

Monte Giordano; as he left the house
 He came upon the watch in wait for him
 Set by the Barigel, — was caught and
 caged.

News of which capture being, that same
 hour,

Conveyed to Rome, forthwith our Emi-
 nence

Commands Taverna, Governor and Judge,
 To have the process in especial care,

Be, first to last, not only president
In person, but inquisitor as well,
Nor trust the by-work to a substitute:
Bids him not, squeamish, keep the bench,
but scrub

The floor of Justice, so to speak, — go try
His best in prison with the criminal:
Promising, as reward for by-work done
Fairly on all-fours, that, success obtained
And crime avowed, or such connivency

10 With crime as should procure a decent
death —

Himself will humbly beg — which means,
procure —

The Hat and Purple from his relative
The Pope, and so repay a diligence
Which, meritorious in the Cenci-case,
Mounts plainly here to Purple and the
Hat.

Whereupon did my lord the Governor
So masterfully exercise the task
Enjoined him, that he, day by day, and
week

By week, and month by month, from first
to last

20 Toiled for the prize: now, punctual at his
place,

Played Judge, and now, assiduous at his
post,

Inquisitor — pressed cushion and scoured
plank,

Early and late. Noon's fervour and night's
chill,

Nought moved whom morn would,
purpling, make amends!

So that observers laughed as, many a day,
He left home, in July when day is flame,

Posted to Tordinona-prison, plunged
Into a vault where daylong night is ice,

There passed his eight hours on a stretch,
content,

30 Examining Onofrio: all the stress
Of all examination steadily

Converging into one pin-point, — he
pushed

Tentative now of head and now of heart.
As when the nuthatch taps and tries the
nut

This side and that side till the kernel
sound, —

So did he press the sole and single point
— What was the very meaning of the
phrase

'Do as beseems an honoured cavalier'?

Which one persistent question-torture,
— plied

40 Day by day, week by week, and month by
month,

Morn, noon and night, — fatigued away
a mind

Grown imbecile by darkness, solitude,

And one vivacious memory gnawing there
As when a corpse is confined with a snake
— Fatigued Onofrio into what might seem
Admission that perchance his judgment
groped

So blindly, feeling for an issue — aught
With semblance of an issue from the toils
Cast of a sudden round feet late so free,
He possibly might have envisaged, scarce 50
Recoiled from — even were the issue death
— Even her death whose life was death and
worse!

Always provided that the charge of crime,
Each jot and tittle of the charge were true
In such a sense, belike, he might advise
His brother to expurgate crime with . .
well,

With blood, if blood must follow on 'the
course
Taken as might beseem a cavalier.'

Whereupon process ended, and report
Was made without a minute of delay 60
To Clement who, because of those two
crimes

O' the Massimi and Cenci flagrant late,
Must needs impatiently desire result.

Result obtained, he bade the Governor
Summon the Congregation and dispatch.
Summons made, sentence passed accord-
ingly

— Death by beheading. When his death-
decree

Was intimated to Onofrio, all
Man could do — that did he to save him-
self.

'Twas much, the having gained for his 70
defence

The Advocate o' the Poor, with natural
help

Of many noble friendly persons fain
To disengage a man of family,

So young too, from his grim entanglement:
But Cardinal Aldobrandini ruled

There must be no diversion of the law.
Justice is justice, and the magistrate

Bears not the sword in vain. Who sins
must die.

So, the Marchese had his head cut off,
With Rome to see, a concourse infinite, 80
In Place Saint Angelo beside the Bridge:
Where, demonstrating magnanimity
Adequate to his birth and breed, — poor
boy! —

He made the people the accustomed speech,
Exhorted them to true faith, honest works,
And special good behaviour as regards
A parent of no matter what the sex,
Bidding each son take warning from him-
self.

Truly, it was considered in the boy

Stark staring lunacy, no less, to snap
So plain a bait, be hooked and hauled
ashore

By such an angler as the Cardinal!
Why make confession of his privity
To 'Paolo's enterprise? Mere sealing
lips —

Or, better, saying "When I counselled him
'To do as might besecm a cavalier,'
What could I mean but 'Hide our parent's
shame

As Christian ought, by aid of Holy Church!
30 Bury it in a convent — ay, beneath
Enough dotation to prevent its ghost
From troubling earth!" Mere saying
thus, — 'tis plain,

Not only were his life the recompense,
But he had manifestly proved himself
True Christian, and in lieu of punish-
ment

Got praise of all men. So the populace.

Anyhow, when the Pope made promise
good

(That of Aldobrandini, near and dear)
And gave Taverna, who had toiled so
much,

20 A Cardinal's equipment, some such word
As this 'from mouth to ear went saucily:
'Taverna's cap is dyed in what he drew
From Santa Croce's veins!' So joked the
world.

I add: Onofrio left one child behind,
A daughter named Valeria, dowered with
grace

Abundantly of soul and body, doomed
To life the shorter for her father's fate.
By death of her, the Marquise returned
To that Orsini House from whence it
came:

30 Oriolo having passed as donative
To Santa Croce from their ancestors.

And no word more? By all means!
Would you know

The authoritative answer, when folk urged
'What made Aldobrandini, hound-like
staunch,

Hunt out of life a harmless simpleton?"
The answer was — "Hatred implacable,
By reason they were rivals in their love."
The Cardinal's desire was to a dame
Whose favour was Onofrio's. Pricked
with pride,

40 The simpleton must ostentatiously
Display a ring, the Cardinal's love-gift,
Given to Onofrio as the lady's gage;
Which ring on finger, as he put forth hand
To draw a tapestry, the Cardinal
Saw and knew, gift and owner, old and
young;
Whereon a fury entered him — the fire

He quenched with what could quench fire
only — blood.

Nay, more: "there want not who affirm
to boot,

The unwise boy, a certain festal eve,
Feigned ignorance of who the wight might 5
be

That pressed too closely on him with a
crowd.

He struck the Cardinal a blow: and then,
To put a face upon the incident,

Dared next day, smug as ever, go pay court
I' the Cardinal's antechamber. Mark
and mend,

Ye youth, by this example how may greed
Vainglorious operate in worldly souls!"

So ends the chronicler, beginning with
"God's justice, tardy though it prove per-
chance,

Rests never till it reach delinquency." 6
Ay, or how otherwise had come to pass
That Victor rules, this present year, in
Rome?

FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL.

A REMINISCENCE OF A.D. 1676.

[Baldinucci, who was born at Florence
in 1624, is the author of a History of
Italian Art, in the course of which, under
the name of the painter Buti, he records
the events which form the subject-matter
of this poem.]

I.

"No, boy, we must not" — so began
My Uncle (he's with God long since)
A-petting me, the good old man!
"We must not" — and he seemed to
wince,

And lost that laugh whereto had grown
His chuckle at my piece of news,
How cleverly I aimed my stone —
"I fear we must not pelt the Jews!" 7

II.

"When I was young indeed, — ah, faith
Was young and strong in Florence too!
We Christians never dreamed of scathe
Because we cursed or kicked the crew.
But now — well, well! The olive-crops
Weighed double then, and Arno's pranks
Would always spare religious shops
Whenever he o'erflowed his banks!

III.

"I'll tell you" — and his eye regained
Its twinkle — "tell you something 8
choice!

Something may help you keep unstained
Your honest zeal to stop the voice
Of unbelief with stone-throw — spite
Of laws, which modern fools enact,
That we must suffer Jews in sight
Go wholly unmclestcd! Fact!

IV.

“There was, then, in my youth, and yet
Is, by our San Frediano, just
Below the Blessed Olivct,
A wayside ground wherein they thrust
Their dead, — these Jews, — the more
our shame!
Except that, so they will but die,
Christians perchance incur no blame
In giving hogs a hoist to styce.

V.

“There, anyhow, Jews stow away
Their dead; and, — such their insolence, —
Slink at odd times to sing and pray
As Christians do — all make-pretence! —
Which wickedness they perpetrate
Because they think no Christians see.
They reckoned here, at any rate,
Without their host: ha, ha, he, he!

VI.

“For, what should join their plot of
ground
But a good Farmer’s Christian field?
The Jews had hedged their corner round
With bramble-bush to keep concealed
Their doings: for the public road
Ran betwixt this their ground and that
The Farmer’s, where he ploughed and
sowed,
Grew corn for barn and grapes for vat.

VII.

“So, properly to guard his store
And gall the unbelievers too,
He builds a shrine and, what is more,
Procures a painter whom I knew,
One Buti (he’s with God) to paint
A holy picture there — no less
Than Virgin Mary free from taint
Borne to the sky by angels: yes!

VIII.

“Which shrine he fixed, — who says him
nay? —
A-facing with its picture-side
Not, as you’d think, the public way,
But just where sought these hounds to
hide
Their carrion from that very truth
Of Mary’s triumph: not a hound
Could act his mummeries uncouth
But Mary shamed the pack all round!

IX.

“Now, if it was amusing, judge!
— To see the company arrive,
Each Jew intent to end his trudge
And take his pleasure (though alive) 54
With all his Jewish kith and kin
Below ground, have his venom out,
Sharpen his wits for next day’s sin,
Curse Christians, and so home, no
doubt!

X.

“Whereas, each phyzz upturned beholds
Mary, I warrant, soaring brave!
And in a trice, beneath the folds
Of filthy garb which gowns each knave,
Down drops it — there to hide grimace,
Contortion of the mouth and nose 60
At finding Mary in the place
They’d keep for Pilate, I suppose!

XI.

“At last, they will not brook — not they! —
Longer such outrage on their tribe:
So, in some hole and corner, lay
Their heads together — how to bribe
The meritorious Farmer’s self
To straight undo his work, restore
Their chance to meet and muse on pelf —
Pretending sorrow, as before! 70

XII.

“Forthwith, a posse, if you please,
Of Rabbi This and Rabbi That
Almost go down upon their knees
To get him lay the picture flat,
The spokesman, eighty years of age,
Grey as a badger, with a goat’s
Not only beard but bleat, ’gins wage
War with our Mary. Thus he dotes: —

XIII.

“Friends, grant a grace! How Hebrews
toil
Through life in Florence. — why relate 80
To those who lay the burden, spoil
Our paths of peace? We bear our fate.
But when with life the long toil ends,
Why must you — the expression craves
Pardon, but truth compels me, friends! —
Why must you plague us in our graves?

XIV.

“Thoughtlessly plague, I would believe!
For how can you — the lords of ease
By nurture, birthright — e’en conceive
Our luxury to lie with irees 94
And turf, — the cricket and the bird
Left for our last companionship:
No harsh deed, no unkindly word,
No frowning brow nor scornful lip!

XV.

“‘Death’s luxury, we now rehearse
While, living, through your streets we fare
And take your hatred: nothing worse
Have we, once dead and safe, to bear!
So we refresh our souls, fulfil
Our works, our daily tasks; and thus
Gather you grain — earth’s harvest — still
The wheat for you, the straw for us.

XVI.

to “‘What flouting in a face, what harm,
In just a lady-borne from bier
By boys’ heads, wings for leg and arm?”
You question. Friends, the harm is
here —
That just when our last sigh is heaved,
And we would fain thank God and you
For labour done and peace achieved,
Back comes the Past in full review!

XVII.

to “‘At sight of just that simple flag,
Starts the foe-feeling serpent-like
From slumber. Leave it lulled, nor drag —
Though fangless — forth, what needs
must strike
When stricken sore, though stroke be vain
Against the mailed oppressor! Give
Play to our fancy that we gain
Life’s rights when once we cease to live!

XVIII.

to “‘Thus much to courtesy, to kind,
To conscience! Now to Florence folk!
There’s core beneath this apple-rind,
Beneath this white-of-egg there’s yolk!
Beneath this prayer to courtesy,
Kind, conscience — there’s a sum to
pouch!
How many ducats down will buy
Our shame’s removal, sirs? Avouch!

XIX.

to “‘Removal, not destruction, sirs!
Just turn your picture! Let it front
The public path! Or memory errs,
Or that same public path is wont
To witness many a chance befall
Of lust, theft, bloodshed — sins enough,
Wherein our Hebrew part is small.
Convert yourselves!’ — he cut up rough.

XX.

“Look you, how soon a service paid
Religion yields the servant fruit!
A prompt reply our Farmer made
So following: ‘Sirs, to grant your suit
Involves much danger! How? Trans-
pose
Our Lady? Stop the chastisement.

All for your good, herself bestows?
What wonder if I grudge consent?

XXI.

“‘— Yet grant it: since, what cash I take
Is so much saved from wicked use.
We know you! And, for Mary’s sake,
A hundred ducats shall induce
Concession to your prayer. One do
Suffices: Master Buti’s brush
Turns Mary round the other way,
And deluges your side with slush.

XXII.

“‘Down with the ducats therefore!’ Dump
Dump, dump it falls, each counted piece,
Hard gold. Then out of door they stump,
These dogs, each brisk as with new lease
Of life, I warrant, — glad he’ll die
Henceforward just as he may choose,
Be buried and in clover lie!
Well said Esaias — ‘stiff-necked Jews!’

XXIII.

“‘Off posts without a minute’s loss
Our Farmer, once the cash in poke
And summons Buti — ere its gloss
Have time to fade from off the joke —
To chop and change his work, undo
The done side, make the side, now blank,
Recipient of our Lady — who,
Displaced thus, had these dogs to thank!

XXIV.

“‘Now, boy, you’re hardly to instruct
In technicalities of Art!
My nephew’s childhood sure has sucked
Along with mother’s-milk some part
Of painter’s-practice — learned, at least,
How expeditiously is plied
A work in fresco — never ceased
When once begun — a day, each side.

XXV.

“‘So, Buti — (he’s with God) — begins:
First covers up the shrine all round
With hoarding; then, as like as twins,
Paints, t’other side the burial-ground,
New Mary, every point the same;
Next, sluices over, as agreed,
The old; and last — but, spoil the same
By telling you? Not I, indeed!’

XXVI.

“‘Well, ere the week was half at end,
Out came the object of this zeal,
This fine alacrity to spend
Hard money for mere dead men’s weal!
How think you? That old spokesman
Jew
Was High Priest, and he had a wife

As old, and she was dying too,
And wished to end in peace her life!

XXVII.

"And he must humour dying whims,
And soothe her with the idle hope
They'd say their prayers and sing their
hymns
As if her husband were the Pope!
And she did die — believing just
This privilege was purchased! Dead
In comfort through her foolish trust!
10 'Stiff-necked ones,' well Esaias said!

XXVIII.

"So, Sabbath morning, out of gate
And on to way, what sees our arch
Good Farmer? Why, they hoist their
freight —
The corpse — on shoulder, and so,
march!
'Now for it, Buti!' In the nick
Of time 'tis pully-haully, hence
With hoarding! O'er the wayside quick
There's Mary, plain in evidence!

XXIX.

"And here's the convoy halting: right!
20 O they are bent on howling psalms
And growling prayers, when opposite!
And yet they glance, for all their qualms,
Approve that promptitude of his,
The Farmer's — duly at his post
To take due thanks from every phyz,
Sour smirk — nay, surly smile almost!

XXX.

"Then earthward drops each brow again;
The solemn task's resumed; they reach
Their holy field — the unholy train:
30 Enter its precinct, all and each,
Wrapt somehow in their godless rites;
Till, rites at end, up-waking, lo
They lift their faces! What delights
The mourners as they turn to go?

XXXI.

"Ha, ha, he, he! On just the side
They drew their purse-strings to make
quit
Of Mary, — Christ the Crucified
Fronted them now — these biters bit!
Never was such a hiss and snort,
40 Such screwing nose and shooting lip!
Their purchase — honey in report —
Proved gall and verjuice at first sip!

XXXII.

"Out they break, on they bustle, where,
A-top of wall, the Farmer waits
With Buti: never fun so rare!

The Farmer has the best: he rates
The rascal, as the old High Priest
Takes on himself to sermonise —
Nay, sneer '*We Jews supposed, at least,*
Theft was a crime in Christian eyes!' 50

XXXIII.

"*'Theft?'* cries the Farmer. '*Eat your words!*
Show me what constitutes a breach
Of faith in ought was said or heard!
I promised you in plainest speech
I'd take the thing you count disgrace
And put it here — and here 'tis put!
Did you suppose I'd leave the place
Blank, therefore, just your rage to glut?

XXXIV.

"*'I guess you dared not stipulate*
For such a damned impertinence! 60
So, quick, my greybeard, out of gate
And in at Ghetto! Haste you hence!
As long as I have house and land,
To spite you irreligious chaps
Here shall the Crucifixion stand —
Unless you down with cash, perhaps!'

XXXV.

"So snickered he and Buti both.
The Jews said nothing, interchanged
A glance or two, renewed their oath
To keep ears stopped and hearts es- 70
tranged
From grace, for all our Church can do;
Then off they scuttle: sullen jog
Homewards, against our Church to brew
Fresh mischief in their synagogue.

XXXVI.

"But next day — see what happened, boy!
See why I bid you have a care
How you pelt Jews! The knaves employ
Such methods of revenge, forbear
No outrage on our faith, when free
To wreak their malice! Here they 80
took
So base a method — plague o' me
If I record it in my Book!

XXXVII.

"For, next day, while the Farmer sat
Laughing with Buti, in his shop,
At their successful joke, — rat-tat, —
Door opens, and they're like to drop
Down to the floor as in their stalks
A six-feet-high herculean-built
Young he-Jew with a beard that baulks
Description. '*Help ere blood be spill!*' 90

XXXVIII.

— "Screamed Buti: for he recognised
Whom but the son, no less no more,

Of that High Priest his work surprised
 So pleasantly the day before!
 Son of the mother, then, whereof
 The bier he lent a shoulder to,
 And made the moans about, dared scoff
 At sober Christian grief — the Jew!

XXXIX.

“*Sirs, I salute you! Never rise!
 No apprehension!*” (Buti, white
 And trembling like a tub of size,
 10 Had tried to smuggle out of sight
 The picture’s self — the thing in oils,
 You know, from which a fresco’s dashed
 Which courage speeds while caution spoils)
‘Stay and be praised, sir, unabashed!’

XL.

“*Praised, — ay, and paid too: for I come
 To buy that very work of yours.
 My poor abode, which boasts — well, some
 Few specimens of Art, secures
 Haply, a masterpiece indeed*
 20 *If I should find my humble means
 Suffice the outlay. So, proceed!
 Propose — ere prudence intervenes!’*

XLI.

“On Buti, cowering like a child,
 These words descended from aloft,
 In tone so ominously mild,
 With smile terrifically soft
 To that degree — could Buti dare
 (Poor fellow) use his brains, think
 twice?
 He asked, thus taken unaware,
 30 No more than just the proper price!

XLII.

“*Done!*” cries the monster, “*I disburse
 Forthwith your moderate demand.
 Count on my custom — if no worse
 Your future work be, understand,
 Than this I carry off! No aid!
 My arm, sir, lacks nor bone nor thews:
 The burden’s easy, and we’re made,
 Easy or hard, to bear — we Jews!’*

XLIII.

“Crossing himself at such escape,
 40 Buti by turns the money eyes
 And, timidly, the stalwart shape
 Now moving doorwards; but, more
 wise,
 The Farmer, — who, though dumb, this
 while
 Had watched advantage, — straight
 conceived
 A reason for that tone and smile
 So mild and soft! The Jew — be-
 lieved!

XLIV.

“Mary in triumph borne to deck
 A Hebrew household! Pictured where
 No one was used to bend the neck
 In praise or bow the knee in prayer!
 Borne to that domicile by whom?
 The son of the High Priest! Through
 what?
 An insult done his mother’s tomb!
 Saul changed to Paul — the case came
 pat!

XLV.

“*Stay, dog Jew . . . gentle sir, that is!
 Resolve me! Can it be, she crowned, —
 Mary, by miracle, — Oh bliss! —
 My present to your burial ground?
 Certain, a ray of light has burst
 Your veil of darkness! Had you else, 6
 Only for Mary’s sake, unpursed
 So much hard money? Tell — oh, tell’s!*”

XLVI.

“Round — like a serpent that we took
 For worm and trod on — turns his
 bulk
 About the Jew. First dreadful look
 Sends Buti in a trice to skulk
 Out of sight somewhere, safe — alack!
 But our good Farmer faith made bold:
 And firm (with Florence at his back)
 He stood, while gruff the gutturals 7
 rolled —

XLVII.

“*Ay, sir, a miracle was worked,
 By quite another power, I trow,
 Than ever yet in canvas lurked,
 Or you would scarcely face me now!
 A certain impulse did suggest
 A certain grasp with this right-hand,
 Which probably had put to rest
 Our quarrel, — thus your throat once
 spanned!*

XLVIII.

“*But I remembered me, subdued
 That impulse, and you face me still! 8
 And soon a philosophic mood
 Succeeding (hear it, if you will!)
 Has altogether changed my views
 Concerning Art. Blind prejudice!
 Well may you Christians tax us Jews
 With scrupulosity too nice!*

XLIX.

“*For, don’t I see, — let’s issue join! —
 Whenever I’m allowed pollute
 (I — and my little bag of coin)
 Some Christian palace of repute, — 9
 Don’t I see stuck up everywhere
 Abundant proof that cultured taste
 Has Beauty for its only care,
 And upon Truth no thought to waste?*

I.

“Jew, since it must be, take in pledge
Of payment’ — so a Cardinal
Has sighed to me as if a wedge
Entered his heart — ‘this best of all
My treasures!’ Leda, Ganymede
Or Antiope: swan, eagle, ape,
(Or what’s the beast of what’s the breed)
And Jupiter in every shape!

II.

“Whereat if I presume to ask
But, Eminence, though Titian’s whisk
Of brush have well performed its task,
How comes it these false godships frisk
In presence of — what yonder frame
Pretends to image? Surely, odd
It seems, you let confront The Name
Each beast the heathen called his god!

III.

“Benignant smiles me pity straight
The Cardinal. ’Tis Truth, we prize!
Art’s the sole question in debate!
These subjects are so many lies.
We treat them with a proper scorn
When we turn lies — called gods for-
sooth —
To lies’ fit use, now Christ is born.
Drawing and colouring are Truth.

III.

“Think you I honour lies so much
As scruple to parade the charms
Of Leda — Titian, every touch —
Because the thing within her arms
Means Jupiter who had the praise
And prayer of a benighted world?
He would have mine too, if, in days
Of light, I kept the canvas furled!

IV.

“So ending, with some easy gibe.
What power has logic! I, at once,
Acknowledged error in our tribe
So squeamish that, when friends ensconce
A pretty picture in its niche
To do us honour, deck our graves,
We fret and fume and have an itch
To strangle folk — ungrateful knaves!

IV.

“No, sir! Be sure that — what’s its style,
Your picture? — shall possess ungrudging
A place among my rank and file
Of Ledas and what not — be judged
Just as a picture! and (because
I fear me much I scarce have bought
A Titian) Master Buti’s flaws
Found there, will have the laugh flaws
ought!

LVI.

“So, with a scowl, it darkens door —
This bulk — no longer! Buti makes
Prompt glad re-entry; there’s a score
Of oaths, as the good Farmer wakes
From what must needs have been a trance,
Or he had struck (he swears) to ground
The bold bad mouth that dared advance
Such doctrine the reverse of sound!

LVII.

“Was magic here? Most like! For, since,
Somehow our city’s faith grows still
More and more lukewarm, and our Prince
Or loses heart or wants the will
To check increase of cold. ’Tis ‘Live
And let live!’ Languidly repress
The Dissident! In short, — contrive
Christians must bear with Jews: no
less!

LVIII.

“The end seems, any Israelite
Wants any picture, — pishes, poohs,
Purchases, hangs it full in sight
In any chamber he may choose!
In Christ’s crown, one more thorn we rue!
In Mary’s bosom, one more sword!
No, boy, you must not pelt a Jew!
O Lord, how long? How long, O
Lord?”

EPILOGUE.

οἱ δ' ἀμφορῆς οἶνον μέλανος ἀνθοσμίου. ^{μεστοὶ . . .}

I.

“The poets pour us wine —”
Said the dearest poet¹ I ever knew.
Dearest and greatest and best to me.
You clamour athirst for poetry —
We pour. “But when shall a vintage
be” —

You cry — “strong grape. squeezed gold
from screw,
Yet sweet juice, flavoured flowery-fine?
That were indeed the wine!”

II.

One pours your cup — stark strength,
Meat for a man; and you eye the pulp
Strained, turbid still, from the viscous²
blood

Of the snaky bough: and you grumble
“Good!

For it swells resolve, breeds hardihood;
Dispatch it, then, in a single gulp!”
So, down, with a wry face, goes at length
The liquor: stuff for strength.

¹ His wife. See Mrs. Browning’s “Wine of Cyprus.”
² Sticky.

III.

One pours your cup — sheer sweet,
 The fragrant fumes of a year condensed:
 Suspicion of all that's ripe or rathe,
 From the bud on branch to the grass in
 swathe.¹
 "We suck mere milk of the seasons," saith
 A curl of each nostril — "dew, dispensed
 Nowise for nerving man to feat:
 Boys sip such honeyed sweet!"

IV.

And thus who wants wine strong,
 20 Waves each sweet smell of the year away;
 Who likes to swoon as the sweets suffuse
 His brain with a mixture of beams and
 dew
 Turned syrupy drink — rough strength
 eschews:
 "What though in our veins your wine-
 stock stay?
 The lack of the bloom does our palate
 wrong.
 Give us wine sweet, not strong!"

V.

Yet wine is — some affirm —
 Prime wine is found in the world some-
 where,
 Of potable strength with sweet to match.
 20 You double your heart its dose, yet catch —
 As the draught descends — a violet-
 smatch,
 Softness — however it came there,
 Through drops expressed by the fire and
 worm:
 Strong sweet wine — some affirm.

VI.

Body and bouquet both?
 'Tis easy to ticket a bottle so;
 But what was the case in the cask, my
 friends?
 Cask? Nay, the vat — where the maker
 mends
 His strong with his sweet (you suppose)
 and blends
 30 His rough with his smooth, till none can
 know
 How it comes you may tipple, nothing
 loth,
 Body and bouquet both.

VII.

"You" being just — the world.
 No poets — who turn, themselves, the
 winch
 Of the press; no critics — I'll even say,
 (Being flustered and easy of faith to-day)

¹ The line or ridge of grass thrown together
 by the scythe.

Who for love of the work have learned the
 way
 Till themselves produce home-made, at
 a pinch:
 No! You are the world, and wine ne'er
 purled
 Except to please the world!

VIII.

"For, oh the common heart!
 And, ah, the irremissible sin
 Of poets who please themselves, not us
 Strong wine yet sweet wine pouring thus,
 How please still — Pindar and Æschylus! —
 Drink — dipt into by the bearded chin
 Alike and the bloomy lip — no part
 Denied the common heart!"

IX.

"And might we get such grace,
 And did you moderns but stock our vault
 50 With the true half-brandy half-attar-gul,²
 How would seniors indulge at a hearty pull
 While juniors tossed off their thimbleful!
 Our Shakespeare and Milton escaped
 your fault,
 So, they reign supreme o'er the weaker race
 That wants the ancient grace!"

X.

If I paid myself with words
 (As the French say well) I were dupe
 indeed!
 I were found in belief that you quaffed and
 bowed
 At your Shakespeare the whole day long, 6
 caroused
 In your Milton pottle-deep nor drowsed
 A moment of night — toped on, took heed
 Of nothing like modern cream-and-curd.
 Pay me with deeds, not words!

XI.

For — see your cellarage!
 There are forty barrels with Shake-
 speare's brand.
 Some five or six are abroad: the rest
 Stand spigoted, fauceted. Try and test
 What yourselves call best of the very best!
 How comes it that still untouched they 7
 stand?
 Why don't you try tap, advance a stage
 With the rest in cellarage?

XII.

For — see your cellarage!
 There are four big butts of Milton's
 brew.
 How comes it you make old drips and drops
 Do duty, and there devotion stops?

* Essence of roses.

Leave such an abyss of malt and hops
 Embellied in butts which bungs still
 glue?
 You hate your bard! A fig for your rage!
 Free him from cellarage!

XIII.

'Tis said I brew stiff drink,
 But the deuce a flavour of grape is there.
 Hardly a May-go-down, 'tis just
 A sort of a gruff Go-down-it-must —
 No Merry-go-down, no gracious gust
 Commingles the racy with Springtide's
 rare!
 "What wonder," say you "that we cough,
 and blink
 At Autumn's heady drink?"

XIV.

Is it a fancy, friends?
 Mighty and mellow are never mixed,
 Though mighty and mellow be born at
 once.
 Sweet for the future, — strong for the nonce!
 Stuff you should stow away, ensconce
 In the deep and dark, to be found fast-
 fixed
 At the century's close: such time strength
 spends
 A-sweetening for my friends!

xv.

And then — why, what you quaff
 With a smack of lip and a cluck of tongue,
 Is leakage and leakings — just what haps
 From the tun some learned taster taps
 With a promise "Prepare your watery
 chaps!
 Here's properest wine for old and young!
 Dispute its perfection — you make us
 laugh!
 Have faith, give thanks, but — quaff!"

xvi.

Leakage, I say, or — worse —
 Leakings suffice pot-valiant souls.
 Somebody, brimful, long ago,
 Frothed flagon he drained to the dregs;
 and lo,
 Down whisker and beard what an over-
 flow!
 Lick spilt that has trickled from classic
 jowls,
 Sup the single scene, sip the only verse —
 Old wine, not new and worse!

xvii.

I grant you: worse by much!
 Renounce that new where you never
 gained
 One glow at heart, one gleam at head,
 And stick to the warrant of age instead!

No dwarf's-lap! Fatten, by giants fed!
 You fatten, with oceans of drink un-
 drained?
 You feed — who would choke did a cob-
 web smutch
 The Age you love so much?

xviii.

A mine's beneath a moor:
 Acres of moor roof fathoms of mine
 Which diamonds dot where you please to
 dig;
 Yet who plies spade for the bright and big?
 Your product is — truffles, you hunt with
 a pig!
 Since bright-and-big, when a man would
 dine,
 Suits badly: and therefore the Koh-i-noor
 May sleep in mine 'neath moor!

xix.

Wine, pulse in might from me!
 It may never emerge in must from vat,
 Never fill cask nor furnish can,
 Never end sweet, which strong began —
 God's gift to gladden the heart of man;
 But spirit's at proof, I promise that!
 No sparing of juice spoils what should be
 Fit brewage — mine for me.

xx.

Man's thoughts and loves and hates!
 Earth is my vineyard, these grew there:
 From grape of the ground, I made or marred
 My vintage; easy the task or hard,
 Who set it — his praise be my reward!
 Earth's yield! Who yearn for the Dark
 Blue Sea's,
 Let them "lay, pray, bray" — the addle-
 pates!
 Mine be Man's thoughts, loves, hates!

xxi.

But someone says "Good Sir!"
 ('Tis a worthy versed in what concerns
 The making such labour turn out well)
 "You don't suppose that the nosegay-smell
 Needs always come from the grape?
 Each bell
 At your foot, each bud that your culture
 spurns,
 The very cowslip would act like myrrh
 On the stiffest brew — good Sir!

xxii.

"Cowslips, abundant birth
 O'er meadow and hillside, vineyard too,
 — Like a schoolboy's scrawlings in and out
 Distasteful lesson-book — all about
 Greece and Rome, victory and rout —
 Love-verses instead of such vain ado!
 So, fancies frolic it o'er the earth
 Where thoughts have rightlier birth.

XXIII.

"Nay, thoughtlings they themselves:
 Loves, hates—in little and less and
 least!
 Thoughts? *'What is a man beside a mount!'*
 Loves? *'Absent—poor lovers the minutes
 count!'*
 Hates? *'Fie—Pope's letters to Martha
 Blount!'*
 These furnish a wine for a children's-
 feast:
 Insipid to man, they suit the elves
 Like thoughts, loves, hates themselves."

XXIV.

And, friends, beyond dispute
 10 I too have the cowslips dewy and dear.
 Punctual as Springtide forth peep they:
 I leave them to make my meadow gay.
 But I ought to pluck and impound them,
 ah?
 Not let them alone, but deftly shear
 And shred and reduce to — what may suit
 Children, beyond dispute?

XXV.

And here's May-month, all bloom,
 All bounty: what if I sacrifice?
 If I out with shears and shear, nor stop
 20 Shearing till prostrate, lo, the crop?
 And will you prefer it to ginger-pop
 When I've made you wine of the mem-
 ories
 Which leave as bare as a churchyard
 tomb
 My meadow, late all bloom?

XXVI.

Nay, what ingratitude
 Should I hesitate to amuse the wits
 That have pulled so long at my flask, nor
 grudged
 The headache that paid their pains, nor
 budged
 From bungle before they sighed and
 judged
 "Too rough for our taste, to-day, befits
 The racy and right when the years con-
 clude!"
 Out on ingratitude!

XXVII.

Grateful or ingrate — none,
 No cowslip of all my fairy crew
 Shall help to concoct what makes you wink
 And goes to your head till you think you
 think!
 I like them alive: the printer's ink
 Would sensibly tell on the perfume too.
 I may use up my nettles, ere I've done;
 But of cowslips — friends get none! 4

XXVIII.

Don't nettles make a broth
 Wholesome for blood grown lazy and
 thick?
 Maws out of sorts make mouths out of taste
 My Thirty-four Port — no need to waste
 On a tongue that's fur and a palate — paste!
 A magnum for friends who are sound!
 The sick —
 I'll posset and cosset them, nothing loth,
 Henceforward with nettle-broth!

THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS.

1877.

MAY I be permitted to chat a little, by way of recreation, at the end of a somewhat tedious and perhaps fruitless adventure;

If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language. The use of certain allowable constructions which, happening to be out of daily favour, are all the more appropriate to archaic workmanship, is no violence: but I would be tolerant for once, — in the case of so immensely famous an original, of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear: while, with respect to amplifications and embellishments, — anything rather than, with the good farmer, experience that most signal of mortifications, “to gape for Æschylus and get Theognis.” I should especially decline, — what may appear to brighten up a passage, — the employment of a new word for some old one — *πένος*, or *μέγας*, or *τέλος*, with its congeners, occurring four times in three lines: for though such substitution may be in itself perfectly justifiable, yet this exercise of ingenuity ought to be within the competence of the unaided English reader if he likes to show himself ingenious. Learning Greek teaches Greek, and nothing else: certainly not common sense, if that have failed to precede the teaching. Further, — if I obtained a mere strict bald version of thing by thing, or at least word pregnant with thing, I should hardly look for an impossible transmission of the reputed magniloquence and sonority of the Greek; and this with the less regret, inasmuch as there is abundant musicality elsewhere, but nowhere else than in his poem the ideas of the poet. And lastly, when presented with these ideas, I should expect the result to prove very hard reading indeed if it were meant to resemble Æschylus, *ἐνυβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδιος*, “not easy to understand,” in the opinion of his stoutest advocate among the ancients; while, I suppose, even modern scholarship sympathises with that early declaration of the redoubtable Salmasius, when, look-

ing about for an example of the truly obscure for the benefit of those who found obscurity in the sacred books, he protested that this particular play leaves them all behind in this respect, with their “Hebraisms, Syriasms, Hellenisms, and the whole of such bag and baggage.”¹ For, over and above the purposed ambiguity of the Chorus, the text is sadly corrupt, probably interpolated, and certainly mutilated; and no unlearned person enjoys the scholar’s privilege of trying his fancy upon each obstacle whenever he comes to a stoppage, and effectually clearing the way by suppressing what seems to lie in it. 70

All I can say for the present performance is, that I have done as I would be done by, if need were. Should anybody, without need, honour my translation by a comparison with the original, I beg him to observe that, following no editor exclusively, I keep to the earlier readings so long as sense can be made out of them, but disregard, I hope, little of importance in recent criticism so far as I have fallen in with it. Fortunately, the poorest translation, provided only it be faithful, — though it reproduce all the artistic confusion of tenses, moods, and persons, with which the original teems, — will not only suffice to display what an eloquent friend maintains to be the all-in-all of poetry — “the action of the piece” — but may help to illustrate his assurance that “the Greeks are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated, because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys . . . not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in, stroke on stroke!”² So may all happen! 104

Just a word more on the subject of my

¹ “Quis Æschylum possit affirmare Græce nunc scienti magis patere explicabilem quam Evangelia aut Epistolas Apostolicas? Unus ejus Agamemnon obscuritate superat quantum est librorum sacrorum cum suis Hebraismis et Syriasms et tota Hellenistica suppellectili vel farragine.” — SALMASIUS *de Hellenistica*, Epist. Dedic.

² *Poems by Matthew Arnold*, Preface.

spelling — in a transcript from the Greek and there exclusively — Greek names and places precisely as does the Greek author. I began this practice, with great innocency of intention, some six-and-thirty years ago. Leigh Hunt, I remember, was accustomed to speak of his gratitude, when ignorant of Greek, to those writers (like Goldsmith) who had obliged him by using English characters, so that he might relish, for instance, the smooth quality of such a phrase as “hapalunetai galené;” he said also that Shelley was indignant at “Firenze” having displaced the Dantesque “Firenza,” and would contemptuously English the intruder “Firence.” I supposed I was doing a simple thing enough: but there has been till lately much astonishment at *os* and *us*, *ai* and *oi*, representing the same letters in Greek. Of a sudden, however, whether in translation or out of it, everybody seems committing the offence, although the adoption of *u* for *v* still presents such difficulty that it is a wonder how we have hitherto escaped “Eyrripides.” But there existed a sturdy Briton who, Ben Jonson informs us, wrote “The Life of the Emperor Anthony Pie” — whom we now acquiesce in as Antoninus Pius: for “with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin.” Yet there is, on all sides, much profession of respect for what Keats called “vowelled Greek” — “consonanted,” one would expect; and, in a criticism upon a late admirable translation of something of my own, it was deplored that, in a certain verse corresponding in measure to the fourteenth of the sixth Pythian Ode, “neither Professor Jebb in his Greek, nor Mr. Browning in his English, could emulate that matchlessly musical γόνον ἰδών κάλλιστον ἀνδρῶν.” Now, undoubtedly, “Seeing her son the fairest of men” has more sense than sound to boast of: but then, would not an Italian roll us out “Rimirando il figliuolo bellissimo degli uomini!” whercat Pindar, no less than Professor Jebb and Mr. Browning, τριακῆτος οἶχεται τυχῶν.

It is recorded in the annals of Art¹ that there was once upon a time, practising so far north as Stockholm, a painter and picture-cleaner — sire of a less unhappy son — Old Muytens: and the annalist, Baron de Tessé, has not concealed his profound dissatisfaction at Old Muytens’ conceit “to have himself had something to do with the work of whatever master of eminence might pass through his hands.” Whence it was, — the Baron goes on to

deplore, — that much detriment was done to that excellent piece “The Recognition of Achilles,” by Rubens, through the perversity of Old Muytens, “who must needs take on him to beautify every nymph of the twenty by the bestowment of a widened eye and an enlarged mouth.” I, at least, have left eyes and mouths everywhere as I found them, and this conservatism is all that claims praise for — what is, after all ἀκένυστος ἄμισθος ἀοιδά. No, neither “uncommanded” nor “unrewarded”: since it was commanded of me by my venerated friend Thomas Carlyle, and rewarded will it indeed become if I am permitted to dignify it by the prefatory insertion of his dear and noble name.

R. B.

LONDON: October 1st, 1877.

THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS.

PERSONS.

Warder.

Chorus of Old Men.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

TALTHUBIOS, *Herald.*

AGAMEMNON.

KASSANDRA.

AIGISTHOS.

WARDER.

THE gods I ask deliverance from these labours,

Watch of a year's length whereby, slumbering through it

On the Atreidae's roofs on elbow, — dog-like —

I know of nightly star-groups the assemblage,

And those that bring to men winter and summer

Bright dynasts, as they pride them in the æther

— Stars, when they wither, and the uprisings of them.

And now on ward I wait the torch's token,

The glow of fire, shall bring from Troia message

And word of capture: so prevails audacious

The man's-way-planning hoping heart of woman.

But when I, driven from night-rest, dew-drenched hold to

This couch of mine — not looked upon by visions,

Since fear instead of sleep still stands beside me,

So as that fast I fix in sleep no eyelids —

¹ *Lettres à un jeune Prince, traduites du Suédois.*

And when to sing or chirp a tune I fancy,
 For slumber such song-remedy infusing,
 I wail then, for this House's fortune
 groaning,
 Not, as of old, after the best ways gov-
 erned.
 Now, lucky be deliverance from these
 labours,
 At good news — the appearing dusky fire!
 O hail, thou lamp of night, a day long
 lightness
 Revealing, and of dances the ordainment!
 Halloo, halloo!
 To Agamemnon's wife I show, by shout-
 ing,
 That, from bed starting up at once, i' the
 household
 Joyous acclaim, good-omened to this
 torch-blaze,
 She send aloft, if haply Ilion's city
 Be taken, as the beacon boasts announc-
 ing.
 Ay, and, for me, myself will dance a pre-
 lude,
 For, that my masters' dice drop right, I'll
 reckon:
 Since thrice-six has it thrown to me, this
 signal.
 Well, may it hap that, as he comes, the
 loved hand
 O' the household's lord I may sustain with
 this hand!
 As for the rest, I'm mute: on tongue a
 big ox
 Has trodden. Yet this House, if voice
 it take should,
 Most plain would speak. So, willing I
 myself speak
 To those who know: to who know not
 — I'm blankness.

CHOROS.

The tenth year this, since Priamos' great
 match,
 King Menelaos, Agamemnon King,
 —The strenuous yoke-pair of the Atrei-
 dai's honour
 Two-throned, two-sceptred, whereof Zeus
 was donor —
 Did from this land the aid, the armament
 dispatch,
 The thousand-sailed force of Argives
 clamouring
 30 "Ares" from out the indignant breast, as
 fling
 Passion forth vultures which, because of
 grief
 Away, — as are their young ones, — with
 the thief,
 Lofty above their brood-nests wheel in
 ring,
 Row round and round with oar of either
 wing,

Lament the bedded chicks, lost labour that
 was love:
 Which hearing, one above
 — Whether Apollon, Pan or Zeus — that
 wail,
 Sharp-piercing bird-shriek of the guests
 who fare
 Housemates with gods in air —
 Suchanone sends, against who these assail, 40
 What, late-sent, shall not fail
 Of punishing — Erinus. Here as there,
 The Guardian of the Guest, Zeus, the
 excelling one,
 Sends against Alexandros either son
 Of Atreus: for that wife, the many-hus-
 banded,
 Appointing many a tug that tries the limb,
 While the knee plays the prop in dust,
 while, shred
 To morsels, lies the spear-shaft; in those
 grim
 Marriage-prolusions when their Fury wed
 Danaoi and Troes, both alike. All's said: 50
 Things are where things are, and, as fate
 has willed,
 So shall they be fulfilled.
 Not gently-grieving, not just doling out
 The drops of expiation — no, nor tears
 distilled —
 Shall he we know of bring the hard about
 To soft — that intense ire
 At those mock rites unsanctified by fire.
 But we pay nought here: through our
 flesh, age-weighted,
 Left out from who gave aid
 In that day, — we remain, 60
 Staying on staves a strength
 The equal of a child's at length.
 For when young marrow in the breast doth
 reign,
 That's the old mæn's match, — Ares out of
 place
 In either: but in oldest age's case,
 Foliage a-fading, why, he wends his way
 On three feet, and, no stronger than a
 child,
 Wanders about gone wild,
 A dream in day.
 But thou, Tundareus' daughter, Klutaim- 70
 nestra queen,
 What need? What new? What having
 heard or seen,
 By what announcement's tidings, every-
 where
 Settest thou, round about, the sacrifice
 a-flare?
 For, of all gods the city-swaying,
 Those supernal, those infernal,
 Those of the 'fields', those of the mart's
 obeying, —
 The altars blaze with gifts;
 And here and there, heaven-high the
 torch uplifts

- Flame — medicated with persuasions mild,
 With foul admixture unbeguiled —
 Of holy unguent, from the clotted chrism
 Brought from the palace, safe in its
 abysm.
 Of these things, speaking what may be in-
 deed
 Both possible and lawful to concede,
 Healer do thou become! — of this solici-
 tude
 Which, now, stands plainly forth of evil
 mood,
 And, then . . . but from oblations, hope,
 to-day
- 70 Gracious, appearing, wards away
 From soul the insatiate care,
 The sorrow at my breast, devouring there!
 Empowered am I to sing
 The omens, what their force which, jour-
 neying,
 Rejoiced the potentates:
 (For still, from God, inflates
 My breast song-suasion: age,
 Born to the business, still such war can
 wage)
 — How the fierce bird against the Teukris
 land
- 20 Dispatched, with spear and executing hand,
 The Achaian's two-throned empery —
 o'er Hellas' youth
 Two rulers with one mind:
 The birds' king to these kings of ships, on
 high,
 — The black sort, and the sort that's
 white behind, —
 Appearing by the palace, on the spear-
 throw side,
 In right sky-regions, visible far and wide, —
 Devouring a hare-creature, great with
 young,
 Baulked of more racings they, as she from
 whom they sprung!
 Ah, Linos,¹ say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
- 30 But may the good prevail!
- The prudent army-prophet seeing two
 The Atreidai, two their tempers, knew
 Those feasting on the hare
 The armament-conductors were;
 And thus he spoke, explaining signs in
 view.
 "In time, this outset takes the town of
 Priamos:
 But all before its towers, — the people's
 wealth that was,
 Of flocks and herds, — as sure, shall
 booty-sharing thence
 Drain to the dregs away, by battle violence.
- 40 Only, have care lest grudge of any god
 disturb
 With cloud the unsullied shine of that
 great force, the curb
 Of Troia, struck with damp
- Beforehand in the camp!
 For envyingly is
 The virgin Artemis
 Toward — her father's flying hounds —
 this House —
 The sacrificers of the piteous
 And cowering beast,
 Brood and all, ere the birth: she hates the
 eagles' feast.
 Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
 But may the good prevail!
- "Thus ready is the beauteous one with
 help
 To those small dewdrop-things fierce lions
 whelp,
 And udder-loving litter of each brute
 That roams the mead; and therefore
 makes she suit,
 The fair one, for fulfilment to the end
 Of things these signs portend —
 Which partly smile, indeed but partly
 scowl —
 The phantasms of the fowl.
 I call Ieios Paian² to avert
 She work the Danaoi hurt
 By any thwarting waftures, long and fast
 Holdings from sail of ships:
 And sacrifice, another than the last,
 She for herself precipitate —
 Something unlawful, feast for no man's
 lips,
 Builder of quarrels, with the House
 cognate —
 Having in awe no husband: for remains
 A frightful, backward-darting in the path,
 Wily house-keeping chronicler of wrath, 7
 That has to punish that old children's
 fate!"
- Such things did Kalchas, — with abund-
 ant gains
 As well, — vociferate,
 Predictions from the birds, in journeying,
 Above the abode of either king.
 With these, symphonious, sing —
 Ah, Linos, say — ah, Linos, song of wail!
 But may the good prevail!
- Zeus, whosoe'er he be, — if that express
 Aught dear to him on whom I call — 8
 So do I him address.
 I cannot liken out, by all
 Admeasurement of powers,
 Any but Zeus for refuge at such hours,
 If veritably needs I must
 From off my soul its vague care-burthen
 thrust.
- Not — whosoever was the great of yore,
 Bursting to bloom with bravery all
 round —
 Is in our mouths: he was, but is no more.
 And who it was that after came to be, 9

¹ Taught Hercules music.² Apollo.

Met the thrice-throwing wrestler, — he
Is also gone to ground.
But "Zeus" — if any, heart and soul, that
name —

Shouting the triumph-praise — proclaim,
Complete in judgment shall that man be
found.

Zeus, who leads onward mortals to be wise,
Appoints that suffering masterfully teach.
In sleep, before the heart of each,

A woe-remembering travail sheds in dew
Discretion, — ay, and melts the unwilling
too

By what, perchance, may be a gracious-
ness

Of gods, enforced no less, —
As they, commanders of the crew,
Assume the awful seat.

And then the old leader of the Achaian
fleet,

Disparaging no seer —

With bated breath to suit misfortune's
inrush here

— (What time it laboured, that Achaian
host,

By stay from sailing, — every pulse at
length

Emptied of vital strength, —

Hard over Kalchis shore-bound, current-
crossed

In Aulis station, — while the winds which
post

From Strumon, ill-delayers, famine-
fraught,

Tempters of man to sail where harbourage
is naught,

Spendthrifts of ships and cables, turning
time

To twice the length, — these carded, by
delay,

To less and less away

The Argeians' flowery prime:

And when a remedy more grave and grand
Than aught before, — yea, for the storm
and dearth, —

The prophet to the foremost in command
Shricked forth, as cause of this

Adducing Artemis,

So that the Atreidai striking staves on
earth

Could not withhold the tear) —

Then did the king, the elder, speak this
clear.

"Heavy the fate, indeed, — to disobey!
Yet heavy if my child I slay,

The adornment of my household: with
the tide

Of virgin-slaughter, at the altar-side,
A father's hands defiling: which the way

Without its evils, say?

How shall I turn fleet-fugitive,

Failing of duty to allies?

Since for a wind-abating sacrifice

And virgin blood, — 'tis right they strive,
Nay, madden with desire.
Well may it work them — this that they
require!"

But when he underwent necessity's
Yoke-trace, — from soul blowing un- 50
hallowed change

Unclean, abominable, — thence — an-
other man —

The audacious mind of him began

Its wildest range.

For this it is gives mortals hardihood —

Some vice-devising miserable mood

Of madness, and first woe of all the brood.

The sacrificer of his daughter —
strange! —

He dared become, to expedite

Woman-avenging warfare, — anchors
weighed

With such prelusive rite!

60

Prayings and callings "Father" — naught
they made

Of these, and of the virgin-age, —

Captains heart-set on war to wage!

His ministrants, vows done, the father
bade —

Kid-like, above the altar, swathed in pall,
Take her — lift high, and have no fear at
all,

Head-downward, and the fair mouth's
guard

And frontage hold, — press hard

From utterance a curse against the House
By dint of bit — violence bridling speech. 70

And as to ground her saffron-vest she shed,
She smote the sacrificers all and each

With arrow sweet and piteous,

From the eye only sped, —

Significant of will to use a word,

Just as in pictures: since, full many a
time,

In her sire's guest-hall, by the well-heaped
board

Had she made music, — lovingly with
chime

Of her chaste voice, that unpolluted thing,
Honoured the third libation, — paian that 80

should bring

Good fortune to the sire she loved so well.

What followed — those things I nor saw
nor tell.

But Kalchas' arts, — whate'er they indi-
cate, —

Miss of fulfilment never: it is fate.

True, justice makes, in sufferers, a desire
To know the future woe preponderate.

But — hear before is need?

To that, farewell and welcome! 'tis the
same, indeed,

As grief beforehand: clearly, part for
part,

Conformably to Kalchas' art,
Shall come the event.
And be they as they may, things subsequent, —

What is to do, prosperity betide
E'en as we wish it! — we, the next allied,
Sole guarding barrier of the Apian land.

I am come, reverencing power in thee,
O Klutaimnestra! For 'tis just we bow
To the ruler's wife, — the male-seat man-
bereaved.

10 But if thou, having heard good news, —
or none, —

For good news' hope dost sacrifice thus
wide,

I would hear gladly: art thou mute, —
no grudge!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Good-news-announcer, may — as is the
by-word —

Morn become, truly, — news from Night
his mother!

But thou shalt learn joy past all hope of
hearing.

Priamos' city have the Argeioi taken.

CHOROS.

How sayest? The word, from want of
faith, escaped me.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia the Achaioi hold: do I speak
plainly?

CHOROS.

Joy overcreeps me, calling forth the tear-
drop.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

20 Right! for, that glad thou art, thine eye
convicts thee.

CHOROS.

For — what to thee, of all this, trusty
token?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What's here! how else? unless the god
have cheated.

CHOROS.

Haply thou flattering shows of dreams re-
spectest?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No fancy would I take of soul sleep-
burthened.

CHOROS.

But has there puffed thee up some un-
winged omen?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

As a young maid's my mind thou mockest
grossly.

CHOROS.

Well, at what time was — even sacked, the
city?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Of this same mother Night — the dawn, I
tell thee.

CHOROS.

And who of messengers could reach this
swiftness?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Hephaistos¹ — sending a bright blaze from
Ide.

Beacon did beacon send, from fire the
poster,

Hitherward: Ide to the rock Hermaian
Of Lemnos: and a third great torch o'
the island

Zeus' seat received in turn, the Athoan
summit.

And, — so upsoaring as to stride sea over,
The strong lamp-voyager, and all for
joyance —

Did the gold-glorious splendour, any sun
like,

Pass on — the pine-tree — to Makistos'
watch-place;

Who did not, — tardy, — caught, no wits
about him,

By sleep, — decline his portion of the mis-
sive.

And far the beacon's light, on stream
Euripos

Arriving, made aware Messapios' warders,
And up they lit in turn, played herald on-
wards,

Kindling with flame a heap of grey old
heather.

And, strengthening still, the lamp, de-
caying nowise,

Springing o'er Plain Asopos, — full-moon-
fashion

Effulgent, — toward the crag of Mount
Kithairon,

Roused a new rendering-up of fire the
escort —

And light, far escort, lacked no recog-
nition

O' the guard — as burning more than
burnings told you.

And over Lake Gorgopis light went leap-
ing,

And, at Mount Aigioplanktos safe arriving,
Enforced the law — "to never stint the
fire-stuff."

And they send, lighting up with un-
grudged vigour,

¹ Vulcan's festival.

Of flame a huge beard, ay, the very fore-
land

So as to strike above, in burning onward,
The look-out which commands the Strait
Saronic.

Then did it dart until it reached the out-
post

Mount Arachnaïos here, the city's neigh-
bour;

And then darts to this roof of the Atreidai
This light of Ide's fire not unforefathered!
Such are the rules prescribed the flam-
beau-bearers:

He beats that's first and also last in run-
ning.

10 Such is the proof and token I declare thee,
My husband having sent me news from
Troia.

CHOROS.

The gods, indeed, anon will I pray,
woman!

But now, these words to hear, and sate my
wonder

Thoroughly, I am fain — if twice thou
tell them.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Troia do the Achaioi hold, this same day.
I think a noise — no mixture — reigns i'
the city.

Sour wine and unguent pour thou in one
vessel —

Standers-apart, not lovers, wouldst thou
style them:

And so, of captives and of conquerors,
partwise

20 The voices are to hear, of fortune diverse.
For those, indeed, upon the bodies prostrate

Of husbands, brothers, children upon
parents

- The old men, from a throat that's free
no longer,

Shriekingly wail the death-doom of their
dearest:

While these — the after-battle hungry
labour,

Which prompts the death-faring, marshals
them to breakfast

On the town's store, according to no
billet

Of sharing, but as each drew lot of for-
tune.

In the spear-captured Troic habitations

30 House they already: from the frosts
upathral

And dews delivered, will they, luckless
creatures,

Without a watch to keep, slumber all night
through.

And if they fear the gods, the city-guarders,
And the gods' structures of the conquered
country,

They may not — capturers — soon in turn
be captive.

But see no prior lust befall the army
To sack things sacred — by gain-crav-
ings vanquished!

For there needs homeward the return's
salvation,

To round the new limb back o' the double
race-course.

And guilty to the gods if came the army, 44
Awakened up the sorrow of those slaugh-
tered

Might be — should no outbursting evils
happen.

But may good beat — no turn to see i' the
balance!

For, many benefits I want the gain of.

CHOROS.

Woman, like prudent man thou kindly
speakest.

And I, thus having heard thy trusty
tokens,

The gods to rightly hail forthwith pre-
pare me;

For, grace that must be paid has crowned
our labours.

O Zeus the king, and friendly Night

Of these brave boons bestower — 50
Thou who didst fling on Troia's every

tower
The o'er-roofing snare, that neither great
thing might,

Nor any of the young ones, overpass
Captivity's great sweep-net — one and all

Of Ate held in thrall!

Ay, Zeus I fear — the guest's friend great
— who was

The doer of this, and long since bent
The bow on Alexandros with intent

That neither wide o' the white
Nor o'er the stars the foolish dart should 60

light.
The stroke of Zeus — they have it, as men
say!

This, at least, from the source track forth
we may!

As he ordained, so has he done.
"No" — said someone —

"The gods think fit to care
Nowise for mortals, such

As those by whom the good and fair
Of things denied their touch

Is trampled!" but he was profane.
That they do care, has been made plain 74

To offspring of the over-bold,
Outbreathing "Ares" greater than is

just —
Houses that spill with more than they can
hold,

More than is best for man. Be man's
what must

Keep harm off, so that in himself he find

Sufficiency — the well-endowed of mind!
 For there's no bulwark in man's wealth to
 him
 Who, through a surfeit, kicks — into the
 dim
 And disappearing — Right's great altar.

Yes —

It urges him, the sad persuasiveness,
 Ate's insufferable child that schemes
 Treason beforehand: and all cure is vain.
 It is not hidden: out it glares again,
 A light dread-lamping-mischief, just as
 gleams

10 The badness of the bronze;
 Through rubbing, puttings to the touch,
 Black-clotted is he, judged at once.
 He seeks — the boy — a flying bird to
 clutch,
 The insufferable brand
 Setting upon the city of his land
 Whereof not any god hears prayer;
 While him who brought about such evils
 there,
 That unjust man, the god in grapple
 throws.

Such an one, Paris goes
 20 Within the Atreidai's house —
 Shamed the guest's board by robbery of
 the spouse.

And, leaving to her townsmen throngs
 a-spread
 With shields, and spear-thrusts of sea-
 armament,
 And bringing Ilion, in a dowry's stead,
 Destruction — swiftly through the gates
 she went,
 Daring the undareable. But many a
 groan outbroke
 From prophets of the House as thus they
 spoke.

"Woe, woe the House, the House and
 Rulers, — woe

30 The marriage-bed and dints
 A husband's love imprints!
 There she stands silent! meets no honour
 — no
 Shame — sweetest still to see of things gone
 long ago!

And, through desire of one across the
 main,
 A ghost will seem within the house to
 reign:

And hateful to the husband is the grace
 Of well-shaped statues: from — in place
 of eyes
 Those blanks — all Aphrodite dies.

"But dream-appearing mournful fan-
 tasies —
 There they stand, bringing grace that's
 vain.

For vain 'tis, when brave things one seems
 to view;

The fantasy has floated off, hands through;
 Gone, that appearance, — nowise left to
 creep, —

On wings, the servants in the paths of
 sleep!"

Woes, then, in household and on hearth,
 are such

As these — and woes surpassing these by
 much.

But not these only: everywhere —
 For those who from the land
 Of Hellas issued in a band,
 Sorrow, the heart must bear,
 Sits in the home of each, conspicuous
 there.

Many a circumstance, at least,
 Touches the very breast.

For those

Whom any sent away, — he knows:
 And in the live man's stead,
 Armour and ashes reach
 The house of each.

For Ares, gold-exchanger for the dead,
 And balance-holder in the fight o' the
 spear,

Due-weight from Ilion sends —
 What moves the tear on tear —
 A charred scrap to the friends:
 Filling with well-packed ashes every urn,
 For man — that was — the sole return.
 And they groan — praising much, the
 while,

Now this man as experienced in the strife,
 Now that, fallen nobly on a slaughtered
 pile,

Because of — not his own — another's
 wife.

But things there be, one barks,
 When no man harks:

A surreptitious grief that's grudge
 Against the Atreidai who first sought the
 judge.

But some there, round the rampart, have
 In Ilian earth, each one his grave:
 All fair-formed as at birth,
 It hid them — what they have and hold —
 the hostile earth.

And big with anger goes the city's word,
 And pays a debt by public curse incurred
 And ever with me — as about to hear
 A something night-involved — remain:
 my fear:

Since of the many-slayers — not
 Unwatching are the gods.

The black Erinues, at due periods —
 Whoever gains the lot

Of fortune with no right —

Him, by life's strain and stress
 Back-again-beaten from success,

They strike blind: and among the out-of-sight
 For who has got to be, avails no might.
 The being praised outrageously
 Is grave, for at the eyes of such an one
 Is launched, from Zeus, the thunder-stone.
 Therefore do I decide
 For so much and no more prosperity
 Than of his envy passes unespied.
 Neither a city-sacker would I be,
 10 Nor life, myself by others captive, see.

A swift report has gone our city through,
 From fire, the good-news messenger: if true,
 Who knows? Or is it not a god-sent lie?
 Who is so childish and deprived of sense
 That, having, at announcements of the flame
 Thus novel, felt his own heart fired thereby,
 He then shall at a change of evidence,
 Be worsted just the same?
 It is conspicuous in a woman's nature,
 20 Before its view to take a grace for granted:
 Too trustful, — on her boundary, usurpature
 Is swiftly made;
 But swiftly, too, decayed,
 The glory perishes by woman vaunted.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Soon shall we know — of these light-bearing torches,
 And beacons and exchanges, fire with fire —
 If they are true, indeed, or if, dream-fashion,
 This gladsome light came and deceived our judgment.
 Yon herald from the shore I see, o'er-shadowed
 30 With boughs of olive: dust, mud's thirsty brother,
 Close neighbours on his garb, thus testify me
 That neither voiceless, nor yet kindling for thee
 Mountain-wood-flame, shall he explain by fire-smoke:
 But either tell out more the joyance, speaking.
 Word contrary to which, I aught but love it!
 For may good be — to good that's known —
 — appendage!

CHOROS.

Whoever prays for aught else to this city
 — May he himself reap fruit of his mind's error!

HERALD.

Ha, my forefathers' soil of earth Argeian!
 40 Thee, in this year's tenth light, am I re-turned to —

Of many broken hopes, on one hope chancing;
 For never prayed I, in this earth Argeian
 Dying, to share my part in tomb the dearest.
 Now, hail thou earth, and hail thou also, sunlight,
 And Zeus, the country's lord, and king the Puthian
 From bow no longer urging at us arrows!
 Enough, beside Skamandros, cam'st thou adverse:

Now, contrary, be saviour thou and healer,
 O king Apollon! And gods conquest-granting,

All — I invoke too, and my tutelary 50
 Hermes, dear herald, heralds' veneration, —

And Heroes our forthsenders. — friendly, once more

The army to receive, the war-spear's leavings!

Ha, mansions of my monarchs, roofs beloved,

And awful seats, and deities sun-fronting —

Receive with pomp your monarch, long time absent!

For he comes bringing light in night-time to you,

In common with all these — king Agamemnon.

But kindly greet him — for clear shows your duty —

Who has dug under Troia with the mat- 60
 tock

Of Zeus the Avenger, whereby plains are out-ploughed,

Altars unrecognisable, and gods' shrines, And the whole land's seed thoroughly has perished.

And such a yoke-strap having cast round Troia,

The elder king Atreides happy man — he Comes to be honoured, worthiest of what mortals

Now are. Nor Paris nor the accomplice-city

Outvaunts their deed as more than they are done-by:

For, in a suit for rape and theft found guilty,

He missed of plunder and, in one destruc- 70
 tion,

Fatherland, house and home has mowed to atoms:

Debts the Priamidai have paid twice over.

CHOROS.

Hail, herald from the army of Achaïans!

HERALD.

I hail: — to die, will gainsay gods no longer!

CHOROS.

Love of this fatherland did exercise thee?

HERALD.

So that I weep, at least, with joy, my eyes full.

CHOROS.

What, of this gracious sickness were ye gainers?

HERALD.

How now? instructed, I this speech shall master.

CHOROS.

For those who loved you back, with long-
ing stricken.

HERALD.

This land yearned for the yearning army,
say'st thou?

CHOROS.

So as to set me oft, from dark mind,
groaning.

HERALD.

Whence came this ill mind — hatred to
the army?

CHOROS.

Of old, I use, for mischief's physic, silence.

HERALD.

10 And how, the chiefs away, did you fear
any?

CHOROS.

So that now, — late thy word, — much
joy were — dying!

HERALD.

For well have things been worked out:
these, — in much time,

Some of them, one might say, had luck
in falling,

While some were faulty: since who, gods
excepted,

Goes, through the whole time of his life,
ungrieving?

For labours should I tell of, and bad
lodgments,

Narrow deckways ill-strewn, too, — what
the day's woe

We did not groan at getting for our por-
tion?

As for land-things, again, on went more
hatred!

10 Since beds were ours hard by the foemen's
ramparts,

And, out of heaven and from the earth,
the meadow

Dews kept a-sprinkle, an abiding damage
Of vestures, making hair a wild-beast
matting.

Winter, too, if one told of it — bird-sky-
ing —

Such as, unbearable, Idaian snow
brought —

Or heat, when waveless, on its noontide
couches

Without a wind, the sea would slumber
falling

— Why must one mourn these? O'er and
gone is labour:

O'er and gone is it, even to those dead
ones,

So that no more again they mind uprising,
Why must we tell in numbers those de-
prived ones,

And the live man be vexed with fate's fresh
outbreak?

Rather, I bid full farewell to misfortunes!
For us, the left from out the Argeian army,

The gain beats, nor does sorrow counter-
balance.

So that 'tis fitly boasted of, this sunlight,
By us, o'er sea and land the aery flyers,

"Troia at last taking, the band of Argives
Hang up such trophies to the gods of
Hellas

Within their domes — new glory to grow
ancient!"

Such things men having heard must praise
the city

And army-leaders: and the grace which
wrought them —

Of Zeus, shall honoured be. Thou hast
my whole word.

CHOROS.

O'ercome by words, their sense I do not
gainsay.

For, aye this breeds youth in the old —
"to learn well."

But these things most the house and
Klutaimnestra

Concern, 'tis likely: while they make me
rich, too.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

I shouted long ago, indeed, for joyance,
When came that first night-messenger of
fire

Proclaiming Ilion's capture and dispersion.
And someone, girding me, said, "Through
fire-bearers

Persuaded — Troia to be sacked now,
thinkest?

Truly, the woman's way, — high to lift
heart up!"

By such words I was made seem wit-
bewildered:

Yet still I sacrificed; and, — female-song
with, —

A shout one man and other, through the
city,

Set up, congratulating in the gods' seats.

Soothing the incense-eating flame right fragrant.

And now, what's more, indeed, why need'st thou tell me?

I of the king himself shall learn the whole word:

And, — as may best be, — I my revered husband

Shall hasten, as he comes back, to receive: for —

What's to a wife sweeter to see than this light

(Her husband, by the god saved, back from warfare)

So as to open gates? This tell my husband —

To come at soonest to his loving city.

o A faithful wife at home may he find, coming!

Such an one as he left — the dog o' the household —

Trusty to him, adverse to the ill-minded, And, in all else, the same: no signet-impress

Having done harm to, in that time's duration.

I know nor pleasure, nor blameworthy converse

With any other man more than — bronze-dippings!

HERALD.

Such boast as this — brimful of the veracious —

Is, for a high-born dame, not bad to send forth!

CHOROS.

Ay, she spoke thus to thee — that hast a knowledge

o From clear interpreters — a speech most seemly.

But speak thou, herald! Meneleus I ask of:

If he, returning, back in safety also

Will come with you — this land's beloved chieftain?

HERALD.

There's no way I might say things false and pleasant

For friends to reap the fruits of through a long time.

CHOROS.

How then if, speaking good, things true thou chance on?

HERALD.

For not well-hidden things become they, sundered.

The man has vanished from the Achaic army,

He and his ship too. I announce no falsehood.

CHOROS.

Whether forth-putting openly from Ilion, 30
Or did storm — wide woe — snatch him from the army?

HERALD.

Like topping bowman, thou hast touched the target,

And a long sorrow hast succinctly spoken.

CHOROS.

Whether, then, of him, as a live or dead man

Was the report by other sailors bruited?

HERALD.

Nobody knows so as to tell out clearly
Excepting Helios who sustains earth's nature.

CHOROS.

How say'st thou then, did storm the naval army

Attack and end, by the celestials' anger?

HERALD.

It suits not to defile a day auspicious 40
With ill-announcing speech: distinct each god's due:

And when a messenger with gloomy visage
To a city bears a fall'n host's woes — God ward off! —

One popular wound that happens to the city,

And many sacrificed from many households —

Men, scourged by that two-thonged whip
Ares loves so,

Double spear-headed curse, bloody yoke-couple, —

Of woes like these, doubtless, whoe'er comes weighted,

Him does it suit to sing the Erinues' paian.

But who, of matters saved a glad-news- 50
bringer,

Comes to a city in good estate rejoicing. . . .

How shall I mix good things with evil, telling

Of storm against the Achaioi, urged by gods' wrath?

For they swore league, being arch-foes before that,

Fire and the sea: and plighted troth approved they,

Destroying the unhappy Argeian army.

At night began the bad-wave-outbreak evils;

For, ships against each other Threikian breezes
Shattered: and these, butted at in a
fury

By storm and typhoon, with surge rain-
resounding, —
Off they went, vanished, thro' a bad herd's
whirling.
And, when returned the brilliant light of
Helios,
We view the Aigaian sea on flower with
corpses
Of men Achaian and with naval ravage.
But us indeed, and ship, unhurt i' the hull
too,
Either someone outstole us or outprayed
us —

Some god — no man it was the tiller
touching.

And Fortune, saviour, willing on our ship
sat.

10 So as it neither had in harbour wave-
surge

Nor ran aground against a shore all rocky.
And then, the water-Haides having fled
from

In the white day, not trusting to our fer-
tune,

We chewed the cud in thoughts — this
novel sorrow

O' the army labouring and badly pounded.
And now — if anyone of them is breath-
ing —

They talk of us as having perished: why
not?

And we — that they the same fate have,
imagine.

May it be for the best! Meneleos, then,

20 Foremost and specially to come, expect
thou!

If (that is) any ray o' the sun reports him
Living and seeing to — by Zeus' con-
trivings,

Not yet disposed to quite destroy the lin-
eage —

Some hope is he shall come again to
household.

Having heard such things, know, thou
truth art hearing!

CHOROS.

Who may he have been that named thus
wholly with exactitude —

(Was he someone whom we see not, by
forecastings of the future

Guiding tongue in happy mood?)

— Her with battle for a bridegroom, on all
sides contention-wooded,

30 Helena? Since — mark the suture! —

Ship's-Hell, Man's-Hell, City's-Hell,
From the delicately-pompous curtains that
pavilion well,

Forth, by favour of the gale

Of earth-born Zephyros did she sail.

Many shield-bearers, leaders of the pack,

Sailed too upon their track,

Theirs who had directed oar,

Then visible no more,

To Simois' leaf-luxuriant shore —
For sake of strife all gore!

To Iliou Wrath, fulfilling her intent,
This marriage-care — the rightly named
so — sent:

In after-time, for the tables' abuse
And that of the hearth-partaker Zeus,
Bringing to punishment

Those who honoured with noisy throat
The honour of the bride, the hymenæal
note

Which did the kinsfolk then to singing
urge.

But, learning a new hymn for that which
was,

The ancient city of Priamos

Groans probably a great and general dirge,
Denominating Paris

"The man that miserably marries:" —

She who, all the while before,

A life, that was a general dirge

For citizens' unhappy slaughter, bore.

And thus a man, by no milk's help,

Within his household reared a lion's whelp

That loved the teat

In life's first festal stage:

Gentle as yet,

A true child-lover, and, to men of age,

A thing whereat pride warms;

And oft he had it in his arms

Like any new-born babe, bright-faced, to
hand

Wagging its tail, at belly's strict command.

But in due time upgrown,

The custom of progenitors was shown:

For — thanks for sustenance repaying

With ravage of sheep slaughtered —

It made unbidden feast;

With blood the house was watered,

To household came a woe there was no
staying:

Great mischief many-slaying!

From God it was — some priest

Of Ate, in the house, by nurture thus in-
creased.

At first, then, to the city of Iliou went

A soul, as I might say, of windless calm —

Wealth's quiet ornament,

An eyes'-dart bearing balm,

Love's spirit-biting flower.

But — from the true course bending —

She brought about, of marriage, bitter
ending:

Ill-resident, ill-mate, in power

Passing to the Priamidai — by sending

Of Hospitable Zeus —

Erinus for a bride, — to make brides
mourn, her dower.

Spoken long ago

Was the ancient saying

Still among mortals staying:
 "Man's great prosperity at height of rise
 Engenders offspring nor unchilded dies;
 And, from good fortune, to such families,
 Buds forth insatiate woe."
 Whereas, distinct from any,
 Of my own mind I am:
 For 'tis the unholy deed begets the many,
 Resembling each its dam.
 Of households that correctly estimate,
 Ever a beauteous child is born of Fate.
 But ancient Arrogance delights to generate
 Arrogance, young and strong mid mortals'
 sorrow,
 Or now, or then, when comes the appointed
 morrow.
 And she bears young Satiety;
 And, fiend with whom nor fight nor war
 can be,
 Unholy Daring — twin black Curses
 Within the household, children like their
 nurses.

But Justice shines in smoke-grimed habi-
 tations,
 And honours the well-omened life;
 While, — gold-besprinkled stations
 Where the hands' filth is rife,
 With backward-turning eyes
 Leaving, — to holy seats she hies,
 Not worshipping the power of wealth
 Stamped with applause by stealth:
 And to its end directs each thing begun.
 Approach then, my monarch, of Troia the
 sacker, of Atreus the son!
 How ought I address thee, how ought I
 revere thee, — nor yet overhitting
 Nor yet unbending the grace that is
 fitting?
 Many of mortals hasten to honour the
 seeming-to-be —
 Passing by justice: and, with the ill-faring,
 to groan as he groans all are free.
 But no bite of the sorrow their liver has
 reached to:
 They say with the joyful, — one outside
 on each, too,
 As they force to a smile smileless faces.
 But whoever is good at distinguishing races
 In sheep of his flock — it is not for the eyes
 Of a man to escape such a shepherd's sur-
 prise,
 As they seem, from a well-wishing mind,
 In watery friendship to fawn and be kind.
 Thou to me, then, indeed, sending an
 army for Helena's sake,
 (I will not conceal it) wast — oh, by no
 help of the Muses! — depicted
 Not well of thy midriff the rudder direct-
 ing, — convicted
 Of bringing a boldness they did not desire
 to the men with existence at stake.
 But now — from no outside of mind, nor
 unlovingly — gracious thou art

To those who have ended the labour, ful-
 filling their part;
 And in time shalt thou know, by inquiry
 instructed,
 Who of citizens justly, and who not to
 purpose, the city conducted.

AGAMEMNON.

First, indeed, Argos, and the gods, the
 local,
 'Tis right addressing — those with me the 50
 partners
 In this return and right things done the city
 Of Priamos: gods who, from no tongue
 hearing
 The rights o' the cause, for Ilion's fate
 manslaughter'rous
 Into the bloody vase, not oscillating,
 Put the vote-pebbles, while, o' the rival
 vessel,
 Hope rose up to the lip-edge: filled it was
 not.
 By smoke the captured city is still con-
 spicuous:
 Ate's burnt offerings live: and, dying with
 them,
 The ash sends forth the fulsome blasts of
 riches.
 Of these things, to the gods grace many- 60
 mindful
 'Tis right I render, since both nets out-
 rageous
 We built them round with, and, for sake
 of woman,
 It did the city to dust — the Argeian
 monster,
 The horse's nestling, the shield-bearing
 people
 That made a leap, at setting of the Pleiads,
 And, vaulting o'er the tower, the raw-
 flesh-feeding
 Lion licked up his fill of blood tyrannic.
 I to the gods indeed prolonged this pref-
 ace;
 But — as for *thy* thought, I remember
 hearing —
 I say the same, and thou co-pleader hast 70
 me.
 Since few of men this faculty is born with —
 To honour, without grudge, their friend,
 successful.
 For moody, on the heart, a poison seated
 Its burthen doubles to who gained the
 sickness:
 By his own griefs he is himself made heavy,
 And out-of-door prosperity seeing groans
 at.
 Knowing, I'd call (for well have I experi-
 enced)
 "Fellowship's mirror," "phantom of a
 shadow,"
 Those seeming to be mighty gracious to
 me:

While just Odusseus — he who sailed not willing —
 When joined on, was to me the ready trace-horse.
 This of him, whether dead or whether living,
 I say. For other city-and-gods' concernment —
 Appointing common courts, in full assemblage
 We will consult. And as for what holds seemingly —
 How it may lasting stay well, must be counselled:
 While what has need of medicines Paionian
 We, either burning or else cutting kindly,
 10 Will make endeavour to turn pain from sickness.
 And now into the domes and homes by altar
 Going, I to the gods first raise the right-hand —
 They who, far sending, back again have brought me.
 And Victory, since she followed, fixed remain she!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Men, citizens, Argeians here, my worships!
 I shall not shame me, consort-loving manners
 To tell before you: for in time there dies off
 The diffidence from people. Not from others
 Learning, I of myself will tell the hard life
 20 I bore so long as this man was 'neath Ilion.
 First: for a woman, from the male divided,
 To sit at home alone, is monstrous evil —
 Hearing the many rumours back-revenging:
 And for now This to come, now That bring after
 Woe, and still worse woe, bawling in the household!
 And truly, if so many wounds had chanced on
 My husband here, as homeward used to dribble
 Report, he's pierced more than a net to speak of!
 While, were he dying (as the words abounded)
 30 A triple-bodied Geruon the Second,
 Plenty above — for loads below I count not —
 Of earth a three-share cloak he'd boast of taking,
 Once only dying in each several figure!
 Because of suchlike rumours back-revenging,

Many the halters from my neck, above head,
 Others than I loosed — loosed from neck by main force!
 From this cause, sure, the boy stands not beside me —
 Possessor of our troth-plights, thine and mine too —
 As ought Orestes: be not thou astonished!
 For, him brings up our well-disposed guest-captive
 Strophios the Phokian — ills that told on both sides
 To me predicting — both of thee 'neath Ilion
 The danger, and if anarchy's mob-uproar
 Should overthrow thy council; since 'tis born with
 Mortals, — whoe'er has fallen, the more to kick him.
 Such an excuse, I think, no cunning carries!
 As for myself — why, of my wails the rushing
 Fountains are dried up: not in them a drop more!
 And in my late-to-bed eyes I have damage,
 Bewailing what concerned thee, those torch-holdings
 For ever unattended to. In dreams — why,
 Beneath the light wing-beats o' the gnat,
 I woke up
 As he went buzzing — sorrows that concerned thee
 Seeing, that filled more than their fellow-sleep-time.
 Now, all this having suffered, from soul grief-free
 I would style this man here the dog o' the stables,
 The saviour forestay of the ship, the high roof's
 Ground-prop, son sole-begotten to his father,
 — Ay, land appearing to the sailors past hope,
 Loveliest day to see after a tempest,
 To the wayfaring-one athirst a well-spring,
 — The joy, in short, of 'scaping all that's — fatal!
 I judge him worth addresses such as these are
 — Envy stand off! — for many those old evils
 We underwent. And now, to me — dear headship! —
 Dismount thou from this car, not earthward setting
 The foot of thine, O king, that's Ilion's spoiler!
 Slave-maids, why tarry? — whose the task allotted

To strew the soil o' the road with carpet-
spreadings.
Immediately be purple-strewn the path-
way,
So that to home unhop'd may lead him —
Justice!
As for the rest, care shall — by no sleep
conquered —
Dispose things — justly (gods to aid!) ap-
pointed.

AGAMEMNON.

Offspring of Leda, of my household warder,
Suitably to my absence hast thou spoken,
For long the speech thou didst outstretch!
But aptly

To praise — from others ought to go this
favour.

And for the rest, — not me, in woman's
fashion,
Mollify, nor — as mode of barbarous man
is —

To me gape forth a groundward-falling
clamour!

Nor, strewing it with garments, make my
passage

Envied! Gods, sure, with these behoves
we honour:

But, for a mortal on these varied beauties
To walk — to me, indeed, is nowise fear-
free.

I say — as man, not god, to me do homage!
Apart from foot-mats both and varied
vestures,

Renown is loud, and — not to lose one's
senses,

God's greatest gift. Behoves we him call
happy

Who has brought life to end in loved well-
being.

If all things I might manage thus — brave
man, I!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Come now, this say, nor feign a feeling to
me!

AGAMEMNON.

With feeling, know indeed, I do not
tamper!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Vowed'st thou to the gods, in fear, to act
thus?

AGAMEMNON.

If any, I well knew resolve I outspoke.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

What think'st thou Priamos had done,
thus victor?

AGAMEMNON.

On varied vests — I do think — he had
passaged.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Then, do not, struck with awe at human
censure. . . .

AGAMEMNON.

Well, popular mob-outcry much avails too. 39

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Ay, but the unenvied is not the much
valued.

AGAMEMNON.

Sure, 'tis no woman's part to long for
battle.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, to the prosperous, even suits a beat-
ing.

AGAMEMNON.

What? thou this beating us in war dost
prize too?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Persuade thee! power, for once, grant *me*
— and willing!

AGAMEMNON.

But if this seem so to thee — shoes, let
someone

Loose under, quick — foot's serviceable
carriage!

And me, on these sea-products walking,
may no

Grudge from a distance, from the god's
eye, strike at!

For great shame were my strewment- 40
spoiling — riches

Spoiling with feet, and silver-purchased
textures!

Of these things, thus then. But this
female-stranger

Tenderly take inside! Who conquers
mildly

God, from afar, benignantly regardeth.

For, willing, no one wears a yoke that's
servile:

And she, of many valuables, outpicked
The flower, the army's gift, myself has
followed.

So, — since to hear thee, I am brought
about thus, —

I go into the palace — purples treading.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

There is the sea — and what man shall 50
exhaust it? —

Feeding much purple's worth-its-weight-
in-silver

Dye, ever fresh and fresh, our garments'
tincture;

At home, such wealth, king, we begin —
by gods' help —

With having, and to lack, the household knows not.

Of many garments had I vowed a treading
(In oracles if fore-enjoined the household)
Of this dear soul the safe-return-price
scheming!

For, root existing, foliage goes up houses,
O'er spreading shadow against Scirios dog-
star;

And, thou returning to the hearth domestic,
Warmth, yea, in winter dost thou show
returning.

And when, too, Zeus works, from the green-
grape acrid,

10 Wine — then, already, cool in houses
cometh —

The perfect man his home perambulating!
Zeus, Zeus Perfecter, these my prayers
perfect thou!

Thy care be — yea — of things thou mayst
make perfect!

CHOROS.

Wherefore to me, this fear —
Groundedly stationed here
Fronting my heart, the portent-watcher —
flits she?

Wherefore should prophet-play
The uncalled and unpaid lay,
Nor — having spat forth fear, like bad
dreams — sits she

20 On the mind's throne beloved — well-
suasive Boldness?

For time, since, by a throw of all the
hands,

The boat's stern-cables touched the sands,
Has passed from youth to oldness, —
When under Ilion rushed the ship-borne
bands.

And from my eyes I learn —
Being myself my witness — their return.
Yet, all the same, without a lyre, my soul,
Itself its teacher too, chants from within
Erinus' dirge, not having now the whole

30 Of Hope's dear boldness: nor my inwards
sin —

The heart that's rolled in whirls against
the mind

Justly presageful of a fate behind.

But I pray — things false, from my hope,
may fall

Into the fate that's not-fulfilled-at-all!

Especially at least, of health that's great
The term's insatiable: for, its weight
— A neighbour, with a common wall be-
tween —

Ever will sickness lean;

And destiny, her course pursuing straight,
40 Has struck man's ship against a reef un-
seen.

Now, when a portion, rather than the
treasure,

Fear casts from sling, with peril in right
measure,

It has not sunk — the universal freight,
(With misery freighted over-full)
Nor has fear welched the hull.

Then too the gift of Zeus,

Two-handedly profuse,

Even from the furrows' yield for yearly use
Has done away with famine, the disease;
But blood of man to earth once falling — 5
deadly, black —

In times ere these, —

Who may, by singing spells, call back?

Zeus had not else stopped one who rightly
knew

The way to bring the dead again.

But, did not an appointed Fate constrain
The Fate from gods, to bear no more than
due,

My heart, outstripping what tongue utters,
Would have all out: which now, in dark-
ness, mutters

Moodily grieved, nor ever hopes to find
How she a word in season may unwind 6
From out the enkindling mind.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Take thyself in, thou too — I say, Kassan-
dra!

Since Zeus — not angrily — in household
placed thee

Partaker of hand-sprinklings, with the
many

Slaves stationed, his the Owner's altar
close to.

Descend from out this car, nor be high-
minded!

And truly they do say Alkmené's child
once

Bore being sold, slaves' barley-bread his
living.

If, then, necessity of this lot o'erbalance,
Much is the favour of old-wealthy masters: 7

For those who, never hoping, made fine
harvest

Are harsh to slaves in all things, beyond
measure.

Thou hast — with us — such usage as law
warrants.

CHOROS.

To thee it was, she paused plain speech
from speaking.

Being inside the fatal nets — obeying,
Thou mayst obey: but thou mayst dis-
obey too!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, if she is not, in the swallow's fashion,
Possessed of voice that's unknown and
barbaric,

I, with speech — speaking in mind's scope
— persuade her.

CHOROS.

Follow! The best — as things now stand
— she speaks of.
Obey thou, leaving this thy car-enthronement!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Well, with this thing at door, for me no
leisure
To waste time: as concerns the hearth
mid-navelled,
Already stand the sheep for fireside slaying
By those who never hoped to have such
favour.
If thou, then, aught of this wilt do, delay
not!
But if thou, being witless, tak'st no word in,
Speak thou, instead of voice, with hand as
Kars do!

CHOROS.

She seems a plain interpreter in need of,
The stranger! and her way — a beast's
new-captured!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Why, she is mad, sure, — hears her own
bad senses, —
Who, while she comes, leaving a town new-
captured,
Yet knows not how to bear the bit o' the
bridle
Before she has out-frothed her bloody
fierceness.
Not I — throwing away more words —
will shamed be!

CHOROS.

But I, — for I compassionate, — will chafe
not.
Come, O unhappy one, this car vacating,
Yielding to this necessity, prove yoke's
use!

KASSANDRA.

Otototoi, Gods, Earth, —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Why didst thou "ototoi" concerning
Loxias?
Since he is none such as to suit a mourner.

KASSANDRA.

Otototoi, Gods, Earth, —
Apollon, Apollon!

CHOROS.

Ill-boding here again the god invokes she
— Nowise empowered in woes to stand by
helpful.

KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
For thou hast quite, this second time, de- 30
stroyed me.

CHOROS.

To prophesy she seems of her own evils:
Remains the god-gift to the slave-soul
present.

KASSANDRA.

Apollon, Apollon,
Guard of the ways, my destroyer!
Ha, whither hast thou led me? to what
roof now?

CHOROS.

To the Atreidai's roof: if this thou know'st
not,
I tell it thee, nor this wilt thou call false-
hood.

KASSANDRA.

How! How!
God-hated, then! Of many a crime it
knew —
Self-slaying evils, halts too: 40
Man's shambles, blood-besprinkler of the
ground!

CHOROS.

She seems to be good-nosed, the stranger:
dog-like,
She snuffs indeed the victims she will find
there.

KASSANDRA.

How! How!
By the witnesses here I am certain now!
These children bewailing their slaughters
— flesh dressed in the fire
And devoured by their sire!

CHOROS.

Ay, we have heard of thy soothsaying
glory,
Doubtless: but prophets none are we in
scent of!

KASSANDRA.

Ah, gods, what ever does she meditate? 50
What this new anguish great?
Great in the house here she meditates ill
Such as friends cannot bear, cannot cure
it: and still
Off stands all Resistance
Afar in the distance!

CHOROS.

Of these I witless am — these prophesy-
ings.
But those I knew: for the whole city bruits
them.

KASSANDRA.

Ah, unhappy one, this thou consummatest?
 Thy husband, thy bed's common guest,
 In the bath having brightened . . . How
 shall I declare
 Consummation? It soon will be there:
 For hand after hand she outstretches,
 At life as she reaches!

CHOROS.

Nor yet I've gone with thee! for — after
 riddles —
 Now, in blind oracles, I feel resourceless.

KASSANDRA.

10 Eh, eh, papai, papai,
 What this, I espy?
 Some net of Haides undoubtedly!
 Nay, rather, the snare
 Is she who has share
 In his bed, who takes part in the murder
 there!
 But may a revolt —
 Unceasing assault —
 On the Race, raise a shout
 Sacrificial, about
 A victim — by stoning —
 20 For murder atoning!

CHOROS.

What this Erinus which i' the house thou
 callest
 To raise her cry? Not mé thy word en-
 lightens!
 To my heart has run
 A drop of the crocus-dye:
 Which makes for those
 On earth by the spear that lie,
 A common close
 With life's descending sun.
 Swift is the curse begun!

KASSANDRA.

30 How! How!
 See — see quick!
 Keep the bull from the cow!
 In the vesture she catching him, strikes
 him now
 With the black-horned trick,
 And he falls in the watery vase!
 Of the craft-killing cauldron I tell thee the
 case!

CHOROS.

I would not boast to be a topping critic
 Of oracles: but to some sort of evil
 I liken these. From oracles, what good
 speech
 40 To mortals, beside, is sent?
 It comes of their evils: these arts word-
 abounding that sing the event
 Bring the fear 'tis their office to teach.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me —
 Of me unhappy, evil-destined fortunes!
 For I bewail my proper woe
 As, mine with his, all into one I throw.
 Why hast thou hither me unhappy brought?
 — Unless that I should die with him — for
 nought!
 What else was sought?

CHOROS.

Thou art some mind-mazed creature, god-
 possessed:
 And all about thyself dost wail
 A lay — no lay!
 Like some brown nightingale
 Insatiable of noise, who — well-away! —
 From her unhappy breast
 Keeps moaning Itus, Itus, and his life
 With evils, flourishing on each side, rife.

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, ah me,
 The fate o' the nightingale, the clear re-
 sounder!
 For a body wing-borne have the gods cast
 round her,
 And sweet existence, from misfortunes free:
 But for myself remains a sundering
 With spear, the two-edged thing!

CHOROS.

Whence hast thou this on-rushing god-
 involving pain
 And spasms in vain?
 For, things that terrify,
 With changing unintelligible cry
 Thou strikest up in tune, yet all the while
 After that Orthian style!
 Whence hast thou limits to the oracular
 road,
 That evils bode?

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the nuptials, the nuptials of Paris,
 the deadly to friends!
 Ah me, of Skamandros the draught
 Paternal! There once, to these ends,
 On thy banks was I brought,
 The unhappy! And now, by Kokutos and
 Acheron's shore
 I shall soon be, it seems, these my oracles
 singing once more!

CHOROS.

Why this word, plain too much,
 Hast thou uttered? A babe might learn
 of such!
 I am struck with a bloody bite — here
 under —

• The Diamastigosis.

At the fate woe-wreaking
Of thee shrill shrieking:
To me who hear — a wonder!

KASSANDRA.

Ah me, the toils — the toils of the city
The wholly destroyed: ah, pity,
Of the sacrificings my father made
In the ramparts' aid —
Much slaughter of grass-fed flocks — that
afforded no cure
That the city should not, as it does now,
the burthen endure!
But I, with the soul on fire,
Soon to the earth shall cast me and expire.

CHOROS.

To things, on the former consequent,
Again hast thou given vent:
And 'tis some evil-meaning fiend doth move
thee,
Heavily falling from above thee,
To melodise thy sorrows — else, in singing,
Calamitous, death-bringing!
And of all this the end
I am without resource to apprehend.

KASSANDRA.

Well then, the oracle from veils no longer
Shall be outlooking, like a bride, new-
married:
But bright it seems, against the sun's
uprisings
Breathing, to penetrate thee: so as, wave-
like,
To wash against the rays a woe much
greater
Than this. I will no longer teach by riddles.
And witness, running with me, that of
evils
Done long ago, I nosing track the footstep!
For, this same roof here — never quits a
Choros
One-voiced, not well-tuned since no "well"
it utters:
And truly having drunk, to get more
courage,
Man's blood — the Komos keeps within
the household
— Hard to be sent outside — of sister
Furies:
They hymn their hymn — within the house
close sitting —
The first beginning curse: in turn spit
ferth at
The Brother's bed, to him who spurned it
hostile.
Have I missed aught, or hit I like a bow-
man?
False prophet am I, — knock at doors, a
babble?

Henceforward witness, swearing now, I
know not
By other's word the old sins of this house-
hold!

CHOROS.

And how should oath, bond honourably
binding,
Become thy cure? No less I wonder at
thee
— That thou, beyond sea reared, a strange-
tongued city
Shouldst hit in speaking, just as if thou
stood'st by!

KASSANDRA.

Prophet Apollon put me in this office.

CHOROS.

What, even though a god, with longing
smitten?

KASSANDRA.

At first, indeed, shame was to me to say
this.

CHOROS.

For, more relaxed grows everyone who
fares well.

KASSANDRA.

But he was athlete to me — huge grace
breathing!

CHOROS.

Well, to the work of children, went ye
law's way?

KASSANDRA.

Having consented, I played false to Loxias. 50

CHOROS.

Already when the wits inspired possessed
of?

KASSANDRA.

Already townsmen all their woes I foretold.

CHOROS.

How wast thou then unhurt by Loxias'
anger?

KASSANDRA.

I no one aught persuaded, when I sinned
thus.

CHOROS.

To us, at least, now sooth to say thou
seemest.

KASSANDRA.

Halloo, halloo, ah, evils!
Again, straightforward foresight's fearful
labour
Whirls me, distracting with prelusive last-
lays!

Behold ye those there, in the household
seated, —

Young ones, — of dreams approaching to
the figures?

Children, as if they died by their beloveds —
Hands they have filled with flesh, the meal
domestic —

Entrails and vitals both, most piteous
burthen,

Plain they are holding! — which their
father tasted!

For this, I say, plans punishment a certain
Lion ignoble, on the bed that wallows,
House-guard (ah, me!) to the returning
master

10 — Mine, since to bear the slavish yoke
behooves me!

The ship's commander, Ilion's desolator,
Knows not what things the tongue of the
lewd she-dog

Speaking, outspreading, shiny-souled, in
fashion

Of Ate hid, will reach to, by ill-fortune!
Such things she dares — the female, the
male's slayer!

She is . . . how calling her the hateful
bite-beast

May I hit the mark? Some amphibaina,
— Skulla

Housing in rocks, of mariners the mischief,
Revelling Haides' mother, — curse, no
truce with,

20 Breathing at friends! How piously she
shouted,

The all-courageous, as at turn of battle!
She seems to joy at the back-bringing
safety!

Of this, too, if I nought persuade, all's one!
Why?

What is to be will come. And soon thou,
present,

"True prophet all too much" wilt pitying
style me.

CHOROS.

Thuestes' feast, indeed, on flesh of children,
I went with, and I shuddered. Fear too
holds me

Listing what's true as life, nowise out-
imaged.

KASSANDRA.

I say, thou Agamemnon's fate shalt look
on.

CHOROS.

30 Speak good words, O unhappy! Set
mouth sleeping!

KASSANDRA.

But Paian stands in no stead to the speech
here.

CHOROS.

Nay, if the thing be near: but never be it!

KASSANDRA.

Thou, indeed, prayest: they to kill are busy.

CHOROS.

Of what man is it ministered, this sorrow?

KASSANDRA.

There again, wide thou look'st of my fore-
tellings.

CHOROS.

For, the fulfiller's scheme I have not gone
with.

KASSANDRA.

And yet too well I know the speech Hellenic.

CHOROS.

For Puthian oracles, thy speech, and hard
too.

KASSANDRA.

Papai: what fire this! and it comes upon
me!

Ototoi, Lukeion Apollon, ah me — me!
She, the two-footed lioness that sleeps with
The wolf, in absence of the generous lion,
Kills me the unhappy one: and as a poison
Brewing, to put my price too in the anger,
She vows, against her mate this weapon
whetting

To pay him back the bringing me, with
slaughter.

Why keep I then these things to make me
laughed at,

Both wands and, round my neck, oracular
fillets?

Thee, at least, ere my own fate will I ruin:
Go, to perdition falling! Boons exchange
we —

Some other Ate in my stead make wealthy!
See there — himself, Apollon stripping
from me

The oracular garment! having looked upo-
me

— Even in these adornments, laughed by
friends at,

As good as foes, if the balance weighed
and vainly —

For, called crazed stroller, — as I had been
gipsy,

Beggar, unhappy, starved to death, — I
bore it.

And now the Prophet — prophet me un-
doing,

Has led away to these so deadly fortunes!
Instead of my sire's altar, waits the back-
block

She struck with first warm bloody sacri-
ficing!

Yet nowise unavenged of gods will death
be:

For there shall come another, our avenger,

The mother-slaining scion, father's dooms-
man:

Fugitive, wanderer, from this land an
exile,

Back shall he come, — for friends, cope
stone these curses!

For there is sworn a great oath from the
gods that

Him shall bring hither his fallen sire's
prostration.

Why make I then, like an indweller, moan-
ing?

Since at the first I foresaw Ilion's city
Suffering as it has suffered: and who took
it,

Thus by the judgment of the gods are
faring.

I go, will suffer, will submit to dying!

But, Haides' gates — these same I call, I
speak to,

And pray that on an opportune blow
chancing,

Without a struggle, — blood the calm
death bringing

In easy outflow, — I this eye may close up!

CHOROS.

O much unhappy, but, again, much learned
Woman, long hast thou outstretched!

But if truly

Thou knowest thine own fate, how comes
that, like to

A god-led steer, to altar bold thou treadest?

KASSANDRA.

There's no avoidance, — strangers, no!
Some time more!

CHOROS.

He last is, anyhow, by time advantaged.

KASSANDRA.

It comes, the day: I shall by flight gain
little.

CHOROS.

But know thou patient art from thy brave
spirit!

KASSANDRA.

Such things hears no one of the happy-
fortuned.

CHOROS.

But gloriously to die — for man is grace,
sure.

KASSANDRA.

Ah, sire, for thee and for thy noble children!

CHOROS.

But what thing is it? What fear turns thee
backwards?

KASSANDRA.

Alas, alas!

CHOROS.

Why this "Alas!" if 'tis no spirit's loath-
ing?

KASSANDRA.

Slaughter blood-dripping does the house-
hold smell of!

CHOROS.

How else? This scent is of hearth-sacrifices. 30

KASSANDRA.

Such kind of steam as from a tomb is
proper!

CHOROS.

No Surian honour to the House thou
speak'st of!

KASSANDRA.

But I will go, — even in the household
wailing

My fate and Agamemnon's. Life suffice
me!

Ah, strangers!

I cry not "ah" — as bird at bush —
through terror

Idly! to me, the dead this much bear wit-
ness:

When, for me — woman, there shall die a
woman,

And, for a man ill-wived, a man shall perish!
This hospitality I ask as dying. 40

CHOROS.

O sufferer, thee — thy foretold fate I pity.

KASSANDRA.

Yet once for all, to speak a speech, I fain
am:

No dirge, mine for myself! The sun I
pray to,

Fronting his last light! — to my own
avengers —

That from my hateful slayers they exact
too

Pay for the dead slave — easy-managed
hand's work!

CHOROS.

Alas for mortal matters! Happy-for-
tuned, —

Why, any shade would turn them: if un-
happy,

By throws the wetting sponge has spoiled
the picture!

And more by much in mortals this I pity. 50

The being well-to-do —
Insatiate a desire of this

Born with all mortals is,
 Nor any is there who
 Well-being forces off, aoints
 From roofs whereat a finger points,
 "No more come in!" exclaiming. This
 man, too,
 To take the city of Priamos did the celestials give,
 And, honoured by the god, he homeward comes;
 But now if, of the former, he shall pay
 The blood back, and, for those who ceased to live,
 10 Dying, for deaths in turn new punishment he dooms —
 Who, being mortal, would not pray
 With an unmischievous
 Daimon to have been born — who would not, hearing thus?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! I am struck — a right-aimed stroke within me!

CHOROS.

Silence! Who is it shouts "stroke" — "right-aimedly" a wounded one?

AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! indeed again, — a second, struck by!

CHOROS.

This work seems to me completed by this "Ah me" of the king's;
 But we somehow may together share in solid counsellings.

CHOROS I.

I, in the first place, my opinion tell you:
 20 — To cite the townsmen, by help-cry, to house here.

CHOROS 2.

To me, it seems we ought to fall upon them
 At quickest — prove the fact by sword
 fresh-flowing!

CHOROS 3.

And I, of such opinion the partaker,
 Vote — to do something: not to wait —
 the main point!

CHOROS 4.

'Tis plain to see: for they prelude as
 though of
 A tyranny the signs they gave the city.

CHOROS 5.

For we waste time; while they, — this
 waiting's glory
 Treading on ground, — allow the hand no
 slumber.

CHOROS 6.

I know not — chancing on some plan —
 to tell it:
 'Tis for the doer to plan of the deed also.

CHOROS 7.

And I am such another: since I'm schemeless
 How to raise up again by words — a dead
 man!

CHOROS 8.

What, and, protracting life, shall we give
 way thus
 To the disgracers of our home, these
 rulers?

CHOROS 9.

Why, 'tis unbearable: but to die is better:
 For death than tyranny is the ripper finish!

CHOROS 10.

What, by the testifying "Ah me" of him,
 Shall we prognosticate the man as perished?

CHOROS 11.

We must quite know ere speak these things
 concerning:
 For to conjecture and "quite know" are
 two things.

CHOROS 12.

This same to praise I from all sides abound
 in —
 Clearly to know — Atreides, what he's
 doing!

KLUTAINNESTRA.

Much having been before to purpose
 spoken,
 The opposite to say I shall not shamed be:
 For how should one, to enemies, — in
 semblance,
 Friends, — enmity proposing, — sorrow's
 net-frame
 Enclose, a height superior to outleaping?
 To me, indeed, this struggle of old — not
 mindless
 Of an old victory — came: with time, I
 grant you!
 I stand where I have struck, things once
 accomplished:
 And so have done, — and this deny I shall
 not, —
 As that his fate was nor to fly nor ward
 off.
 A wrap-round with no outlet, as for fishes,
 I fence about him — the rich woe of the
 garment:
 I strike him twice, and in a double "Ah-
 me!"
 He let his limbs go — *there!* And to him,
 fallen,

Upon us in quickness —
Neither much sickness
Neither bed-keeping —
And bear unended sleeping,
Now that subdued
Is our keeper, the kindest of mood!
Having borne, for a woman's sake, much
strife —

By a woman he withered from life!
Ah me!

- 10 Law-breaking Helena who, once,
Hast many, so many souls undone
'Neath Troia! and now the consummated
Much-memorable curse
Hast thou made flower-forth, red
With the blood no rains disperse,
That which was then in the House —
Strife all-subduing, the woe of a spouse.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

- Nowise, of death the fate —
Burdened by these things — supplicate!
20 Nor on Helena turn thy wrath
As the man-destroyer, as "she who hath,
Being but one,
Many and many a soul undone
Of the men, the Danaoi" —
And wrought immense annoy!

CHOROS.

- Daimon, who fallest
Upon this household and the double-raced
Tantalidai, a rule, minded like theirs dis-
placed,
Thou rulest me with, now,
30 Whose heart thou gallest!
And on the body, like a hateful crow,
Stationed, all out of tune, his chant to chant
Doth Something vaunt!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

- Now, of a truth, hast thou set upright
Thy mouth's opinion, —
Naming the Sprite,
The triply gross,
O'er the race that has dominion:
For through him it is that Eros
10 The carnage-licker
In the belly is bred: ere ended quite
Is the elder throe — new ichor!

CHOROS.

- Certainly, great of might
And heavy of wrath, the Sprite
Thou tellest of, in the palace
(Woe, woe!)
— An evil tale of a fate
By Ate's malice
Rendered insatiate!
50 Oh, oh, —
King, king, how shall I bewEEP thee?
From friendly soul whatever say?

Thou liest where webs of the spider o'er-
sweep thee
In impious death, life breathing away.
O me — me!
This couch, not free!
By a slavish death subdued thou art,
From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou boastest this deed to be mine:
But leave off styling me
"The Agamemnonian wife!"
For, showing himself in sign
Of the spouse of the corpse thou dost see,
Did the ancient bitter avenging-ghost
Of Atreus, savage host,
Pay the man here as price —
A full-grown for the young one's sacrifice.

CHOROS.

That no cause, indeed, of this killing art
thou,
Who shall be witness-bearer?
How shall he bear it — how?
But the sire's avenging-ghost might be in
the deed a sharer.
He is forced on and on
By the kin-born flowing of blood,
— Black Ares: to where, having gone,
He shall leave off, flowing done,
At the frozen-child's flesh food.
King, king, how shall I bewEEP thee?
From friendly soul whatever say?
Thou liest where webs of the spider o'er-
sweep thee
In impious death, life breathing away.
O me — me!
This couch, not free!
By a slavish death subdued thou art,
From the hand, by the two-edged dart.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

No death "unfit for the free"
Do I think this man's to be:
For did not himself a slavish curse
To his household decree?
But the scion of him, myself did nurse —
That much-bewailed Iphigeneia, he
10 Having done well by, — and as well, nor
worse,
Been done to, — let him not in Hades
loudly
Bear himself proudly!
Being by sword-destroying death amerced
For that sword's punishment himself in-
flicted first.

CHOROS.

I at a loss am left —
Of a feasible scheme of mind bereft —
Where I may turn: for the house is falling.
I fear the bloody crash of the rain

That ruins the roof as it bursts amain:
The warning-drop
Has come to a stop.
Destiny doth Justice whet
For other deed of hurt, on other whetstones
yet.

Woe, earth, earth — would thou hadst
taken *me*

Ere I saw the man I see,
On the pallet-bed
Of the silver-sided bath-vase, dead!
Who is it shall bury him, who
Sing his dirge? Can it be true
That *thou* wilt dare this same to do —
Having slain thy husband, thine own,
To make his funeral moan:
And for the soul of him, in place
Of his mighty deeds, a graceless grace
To wickedly institute? By whom
Shall the tale of praise o'er the tomb
At the god-like man be sent —
From the truth of his mind as he toils
intent?

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

It belongs not to thee to declare
This object of care!
By us did he fall — down there!
Did he die — down there! and down, no
less,
We will bury him there, and not beneath
The wails of the household over his
death:
But Iphigeneia, — with kindness, —
His daughter, — as the case requires,
Facing him full, at the rapid-flowing
Passage of Groans shall — both hands
throwing
Around him — kiss that kindest of sires!

CHOROS.

This blame comes in the place of blame:
Hard battle it is to judge each claim.
"He is borne away who bears away:
And the killer has all to pay."
And this remains while Zeus is remaining,
"The doer shall suffer in time" — for,
such his ordaining.
Who may cast out of the House its cursed
brood?
The race is to Ate glued!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Thou hast gone into this oracle
With a true result. For me, then, — I
will
— To the Daimon of the Pleisthenidai
Making an oath — with all these things
comply
Hard as they are to bear. For the
rest —
Going from out this House, a guest,

May he wear some other family
To nought, with the deaths of kin by
kin!

And, — keeping a little part of my goods, —
Wholly am I contented in
Having expelled from the royal House 50
These frenzied moods
The mutually-murderous.

AIGISTHOS.

O light propitious of day justice-bringing!
I may say truly, now, that men's avengers,
The gods from high, of earth behold the
sorrows —
Seeing, as I have, i' the spun robes of the
Erinues,
This man here lying, — sight to me how
pleasant! —
His father's hands' contrivances repaying.
For Atreus, this land's lord, of this man
father,
Thuestes, my own father — to speak 60
clearly —
His brother too, — being i' the rule con-
tested, —
Drove forth to exile from both town and
household:
And, coming back, to the hearth turned, a
suppliant,
Wretched Thuestes found the fate assured
him
— Not to die, bloodying his paternal
threshold
Just there: but host-wise this man's im-
pious father
Atreus, soul-keenly more than kindly, —
seeming
To joyous hold a flesh-day, — to my
father
Served up a meal, the flesh of his own
children.
The feet indeed and the hands' top divi- 70
sions
He hid, high up and isolated sitting:
But, their unshowing parts in ignorance
taking,
He forthwith eats food — as thou seest —
perdition
To the race: and then, 'ware of the deed
ill-omened,
He shrieked O! — falls back, vomiting,
from the carnage,
And fate on the Pelopidai past bearing
He prays down — putting in his curse
together
The kicking down o' the feast — that so
might perish
The race of Pleisthenes entire: and thence
is
That it is given thee to see this man pros- 80
trate.
And I was rightly of this slaughter stitch-
man:

Since me, — being third from ten, — with
 my poor father
 He drives out — being then a babe in
 swathe-bands:
 But, grown up, back again has justice
 brought me:
 And of this man I got hold — being with-
 out-doors —
 Fitting together the whole scheme of ill-
 will.
 So, sweet, in fine, even to die were to me,
 Seeing, as I have, this man i' the toils of
 justice!

CHOROS.

Agisthos, arrogance in ills I love not.
 Dost thou say — willing, thou didst kill the
 man here,
 10 And, alone, plot this lamentable slaughter?
 I say — thy head in justice will escape not
 The people's throwing — know that! —
 stones and curses!

AIGISTHOS.

Thou such things soundest — seated at the
 lower
 Oarage to those who rule at the ship's
 mid-bench?
 Thou shalt know, being old, how heavy
 is teaching
 To one of the like age — bidden be modest!
 But chains and old age and the pangs of
 fasting
 Stand out before all else in teaching, —
 prophets
 At souls'-cure! Dost not, seeing aught,
 see this too?
 20 Against goads kick not, lest tript up thou
 suffer!

CHOROS.

Woman, thou, — of him coming new from
 battle
 Houseguard — thy husband's bed the
 while disgracing, —
 For the Army-leader didst thou plan this
 ate too?

AIGISTHOS.

These words too are of groans the prime-
 begetters!
 Truly a tongue opposed to Orpheus hast
 thou:
 For he led all things by his voice's grace-
 charm,
 But thou, upstirring them by these wild
 yelpings,
 Wilt lead them! Forced, thou wilt appear
 the tamer!

CHOROS.

So — thou shalt be my king then of the
 Argians —

Who, not when for this man his fate thou
 plannedst,
 Darest to do this deed — thyself the
 slayer!

AIGISTHOS.

For, to deceive him was the wife's part,
 certes:
 I was looked after — foe, ay, old-begotten!
 But out of this man's wealth will I en-
 deavour
 To rule the citizens: and the no-man-
 minder
 — Him will I heavily yoke — by no means
 trace-horse,
 A corned-up colt! but that bad friend in
 darkness,
 Famine its housemate, shall behold him
 gentle.

CHOROS.

Why then, this man here, from a coward
 spirit,
 Didst not thou slay thyself? But, — 4
 helped, — a woman,
 The country's pest, and that of gods o' the
 country,
 Killed him! Orestes, where may he see
 light now?
 That coming hither back, with gracious
 fortune,
 Of both these he may be the all-conquering
 slayer?

AIGISTHOS.

But since this to do thou thinkest — and
 not talk — thou soon shalt know!
 Up then, comrades dear! the proper thing
 to do — not distant this!

CHOROS.

Up then! hilt in hold, his sword let every-
 one aright dispose!

AIGISTHOS.

Ay, but I myself too, hilt in hold, do not
 refuse to die.

CHOROS.

Thou wilt die, thou say'st, to who accept!
 We the chance demand.

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Nowise, O belovedest of men, may we do
 other ills!
 To have reaped away these, even, is a har-
 vest much to me.
 Go, both thou and these the old men, to
 the homes appointed each,
 Ere ye suffer! It behoved one do these
 things just as we did:
 And if of these troubles there should be
 enough — we may assent

— By the Daimon's heavy heel unfortunately stricken ones!
So a woman's counsel hath it — if one judge it learning-worth.

AIGISTHOS.

But to think that these at me the idle tongue should thus o'erbloom,
And throw out such words — the Daimon's power experimenting on —
And, of modest knowledge missing, — me, the ruler, . . .

CHOROS.

Ne'er may this befall Argeians — wicked man to fawn before!

AIGISTHOS.

Anyhow, in after days, will I, yes, I, be at thee yet!

CHOROS.

Not if hither should the Daimon make Orestes straightway come!

AIGISTHOS.

O, I know, myself, that fugitives on hopes are pasture-fed!

CHOROS.

Do thy deed, get fat, defiling justice, since is the power is thine!

AIGISTHOS.

Know that thou shalt give me satisfaction for this folly's sake!

CHOROS.

Boast on, bearing thee audacious, like a cock his females by!

KLUTAIMNESTRA.

Have not thou respect for these same idle yelpings! I and thou
Will arrange it, o'er this household ruling excellently well.

LA SAISIAZ.

1878.

[The name of a villa near Geneva; means The Sun. A.E.S. stands for Ann Egerton-Smith, who, whilst spending the autumn of 1877 with Mr. and Miss Browning at La Saisiaz, died suddenly of heart disease on the morning of the 14th of September.]

I.

Good, to forgive;
Best, to forget!
Living, we fret;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion!
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee!

II.

Wander at will,
Day after day, —
Wander away,
Wandering still —
Soul that canst soar!
Body may slumber:
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

III.

Waft of soul's wing!
What lies above?
Sunshine and Love,
Skyblue and Spring!
Body hides — where?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care!

LA SAISIAZ.

A.E.S. SEPTEMBER 14, 1877.

DARED and done: at last I stand upon the
summit, Dear and True!
Singly dared and done; the climbing both
of us were bound to do.
Petty feat and yet prodigious: every side
my glance was bent
O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished
through the whole ascent.
Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels,
now minute and now immense:
Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's
own God in evidence!
And no berry in its hiding, no blue space
in its outspread,
Pleaded to escape my footstep, chal-
lenged my emerging head,

(As I climbed or paused from climbing,
now o'erbranched by shrub and tree,
Now built round by rock and boulder, now
at just a turn set free,
Stationed face to face with — Nature?
rather with Infinitude)
— No revelation of them all, as singly I
my path pursued,
But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the
thought stung "Even so
Both of us had loved and wondered just
the same, five days ago!"
Five short days, sufficient hardly to en-
tice, from out its den
Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection
of the cyclamen;
Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber
gum the sloe-tree's gash,
Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden
ripe the mountain-ash:
Yet of might to place between us — Oh
the barrier! Yon Profound
Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point: bar-
rier this, without a bound!
Boundless though it be, I reach you:
somehow seem to have you here
— Who are there. Yes, there you dwell
now, plain the four low walls ap-
pear;
Those are vineyards they enclose from;
and the little spire which points
— That's Collonge, henceforth your dwell-
ing. All the same, howe'er dis-
joints
Past from present, no less certain you are
here, not there: have dared,
Done the feat of mountain-climbing, —
five days since, we both prepared
Daring, doing, arm in arm, if other help
should haply fail.
For you asked, as forth we sallied to see
sunset from the vale,
"Why not try for once the mountain, —
take a foretaste, snatch by stealth
Sight and sound, some unconsidered frag-
ment of the hoarded wealth?
Six weeks at its base, yet never once have
we together won
Sight or sound by honest climbing: let us
two have dared and done
Just so much of twilight journey as may
prove to-morrow's jaunt

Not the only mode of wayfare — wheeled
to reach the eagle's haunt!"

So, we turned from the low grass-path
you were pleased to call "your own,"

Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the
summit's front of stone

Where Salève obtains, from Jura and the
sunken sun she hides,

Due return of blushing "Good Night,"
rosy as a borne-off bride's,

For his masculine "Good Morrow" when,
with sunrise still in hold,

Gay he hails her, and, magnific, thrilled
her black length burns to gold.

Up and up we went, how careless — nay,
how joyous! All was new,

All was strange. "Call progress toil-
some? that were just insulting you!

c How the trees must temper noontide! Ah,
the thicket's sudden break!

What will be the morning glory, when at
dusk thus gleams the lake?

Light by light puts forth Geneva: what a
land — and, of the land,

Can there be a lovelier station than this
spot where now we stand?

Is it late, and wrong to linger? True, to-
morrow makes amends.

Toilsome progress? child's play, call it —
specially when one descends!

There, the dread descent is over — hardly
our adventure, though!

Take the vale where late we left it, pace
the grass-path, 'mine,' you know!

Proud completion of achievement!" And
we paced it, praising still

That soft tread on velvet verdure as it
wound through hill and hill;

20 And at very end there met us, coming
from Collonge, the pair

— All our people of the Chalet — two,
enough and none to spare.

So, we made for home together, and we
reached it as the stars

One by one came lamping — chiefly that
prepotency of Mars —

And your last word was "I owe you this
enjoyment!" — met with "Nay:

With yourself it rests to have a month of
morrrows like to-day!"

Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and
the news of that rare nook

Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on
by no travel-book,

All the same — though latent — patent,
hybrid birth of land and sea,

And (our travelled friend assured you) —
if such miracle might be —

30 Comparable for completeness of both bless-
ings — all around

Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from
world's sight and sound —

Comparable to our Saisiaz, "Hold it fast
and guard it well!

Go and see and vouch for certain, then
come back and never tell

Living soul but us; and haply, prove our
sky from cloud as clear,

There may we four meet, praise fortune
just as now, another year!"

Thus you charged him on departure: not
without the final charge

"Mind to-morrow's early meeting! We
must leave our journey marge

Ample for the wayside wonders: there's
the stoppage at the inn

Three-parts up the mountain, where the
hardships of the track begin;

There's the convent worth a visit; but, the 46
triumph crowning all —

There's Salève's own platform facing glory
which strikes greatness small,

— Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood,
needles red and white and green,

Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge
in his demesne.

So, some three weeks since, we saw them:
so, to-morrow we intend

You shall see them likewise; therefore
Good Night till to-morrow, friend!"

Last, the nothings that extinguish embers
of a vivid day:

"What might be the Marshal's next move,
what Gambetta's counter-play?"

Till the landing, on the staircase saw
escape the latest spark:

"Sleep you well!" "Sleep but as well,
you!" — lazy love quenched, all
was dark.

Nothing dark next day at sundown! Up I 50
rose and forth I fared:

Took my plunge within the bath-pool,
pacified the watch-dog scared,

Saw proceed the transmutation — Jura's
black to one gold glow,

Trod your level path that let me drink the
morning deep and slow,

Reached the little quarry — ravage recom-
pensed by shrub and fern —

Till the overflowing ardours told me time
was for return.

So, return I did, and gaily. But, for once,
from no far mound

Waved salute a tall white figure. "Has
her sleep been so profound?

Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength
for day's expenditure!

Ay, the chamber-window's open: out and
on the terrace, sure!"

No, the terrace showed no figure, tall, 60
white, leaning through the wreaths,

Tangle-twine of leaf and bloom that inter-
cept the air one breathes,

Interpose between one's love and Nature's
loving, hill and dale

Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle
marks the river's inrush pale
— Mazy Arve: whereon no vessel but
goes sliding white and plain,
Not a steamboat pants from harbour but
one hears pulsate amain,
Past the city's congregated peace of homes
and pomp of spires
— Man's mild protest that there's something
more than Nature, man requires,
And that, useful as is Nature to attract the
tourist's foot,
Quiet slow sure money-making proves the
matter's very root, —
Need for body, — while the spirit also
needs a comfort reached
By no help of lake or mountain, but the
texts whence Calvin preached.
10 "Here's the veil withdrawn from landscape:
up to Jura and beyond,
All awaits us ranged and ready; yet she
violates the bond,
Neither leans nor looks nor listens: why is
this?" A turn of eye
Took the whole sole answer, gave the undisputed
reason "why!"

This dread way you had your summons!
No premonitory touch,
As you talked and laughed ('tis told me)
scarce a minute ere the clutch
Captured you in cold for ever. Cold? nay,
warm you were as life
When I raised you, while the others used,
in passionate poor strife,
All the means that seemed to promise any
aid, and all in vain.
Gone you were, and I shall never see that
earnest face again
20 Grow transparent, grow transfigured with
the sudden light that leapt,
At the first word's provocation, from the
heart-deeps where it leapt.

Therefore, paying piteous duty, what
seemed You have we consigned
Peacefully to — what I think were, of all
earth-beds, to your mind
Most the choice for quiet, yonder: low
walls stop the vines' approach,
Lovingly Salève protects you; village-
sports will ne'er encroach
On the stranger lady's silence, whom
friends bore so kind and well
Thither "just for love's sake," — such
their own word was: and who can
tell?
You supposed that few or none had known
and loved you in the world:
May be! flower that's full-blown tempts
the butterfly, not flower that's furled.
30 But more learned sense unlocked you,
loosed the sheath and let expand

Bud to bell and outspread flower-shape at
the least warm touch of hand
— May be, throb of heart, beneath which,
— quickening farther than it knew, —
Treasure oft was disembosomed, scent all
strange and unguessed hue.
Disembosomed, re-embosomed, — must
one memory suffice,
Prove I knew an Alpine-rose which all be-
side named Edelweiss?

Rare thing, red or white, you rest now:
two days slumbered through; and
since
One day more will see me rid of this same
scene whereat I wince,
Tetchy at all sights and sounds and pettish
at each idle charm
Proffered me who pace now singly where
we two went arm in arm, —
I have turned upon my weakness: asked 40
"And what, forsooth, prevents
That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil
of her intents
One she had the most at heart — that we
should thus again survey
From Salève Mont Blanc together?"
Therefore, — dared and done to-day
Climbing, — here I stand: but you —
where?

If a spirit of the place
Broke the silence, bade me question, prom-
ised answer, — what disgrace
Did I stipulate "Provided answer suit my
hopes, not fears!"
Would I shrink to learn my life-time's
limit — days, weeks, months or years?
Would I shirk assurance on each point
whereat I can but guess —
"Does the soul survive the body? Is 50
there God's self, no or yes?"
If I know my mood, 'twere constant —
come in whatsoe'er uncouth
Shape it should, nay, formidable — so the
answer were but truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me,
when 'tis I myself am tasked,
When, by weakness weakness questioned,
weakly answers — weakly asked?
Weakness never needs be falseness: truth
is truth in each degree
— Thunder pealed by God to Nature, whis-
pered by my soul to me.
Nay, the weakness turns to strength and
triumphs in a truth beyond:
"Mine is but man's truest answer — how
were it did God respond?"
I shall no more dare to mimic such re-
sponse in futile speech,
Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere- 60
song out of reach,

Than, — because it well may happen yonder, where the far snows blanch
 Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and hears an avalanche, —
 I shall pick a clod and throw, — cry
 "Such the sight and such the sound!
 What though I nor see nor hear them?
 Others do, the proofs abound!"
 Can I make my eye an eagle's, sharpen ear to recognise
 Sound o'er league and league of silence?
 Can I know, who but surmise?
 If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and you
 Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing lightly in review
 What seemed hits and what seemed misses in a certain fence-play, — strife
 10 Sundry minds of mark engaged in "On the Soul and Future Life," —
 If I ventured estimating what was come of parried thrust,
 Subtle stroke, and, rightly, wrongly, estimating could be just
 — Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form which moved by mine,
 I might well have played at feigning, fooling, — laughed "What need opine
 Pleasure must succeed to pleasure, else past pleasure turns to pain,
 And 'his first life claims a second, else I count its good no gain?" —
 Much less have I heart to palter when the matter to decide
 Now becomes "Was ending ending once and always, when you died?"
 Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the loss
 20 Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers and moss,
 What of you remains beside? A memory! Easy to attest
 "Certainly from out the world that one believes who knew her best
 Such was good in her, such fair, which fair and good were great perchance
 Had but fortune favoured, bidden each shy faculty advance;
 After all — who knows another? Only as I know, I speak."
 So much of you lives within me while I live my year or week.
 Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to aver
 Duly in his turn "I knew him best of all, as he knew her:
 Such he was, and such he was not, and such other might have been
 But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this earthly scene,
 Fails." And so both memories dwindle, yours and mine together linked,
 Till there is but left for comfort, when the last spark proves extinct,

This — that somewhere new existence led by men and women new
 Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and you;
 While ourselves, the only witness to what work our life evolved,
 Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be solved
 By ourselves alone, — who working ne'er shall know if work bear fruit
 Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by stalk and root, —
 We who, darkling, timed the day's birth, — struggling, testified to peace, —
 Earned, by dint of failure, triumph, — we, 40 creative thought, must cease
 In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since sped!
 Why repine? There's ever someone lives although ourselves be dead!

Well, what signifies repugnance? Truth is truth howe'er it strike.
 Fair or foul the lot 'apportioned life on earth, we bear alike.
 Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that fain
 Else would soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings through the fleshly chain, —
 Help that hinders, hindrance proved but help disguised when all too late, —
 Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, how-soe'er explained as Fate,
 Fortune, Providence: we bear, own life a burthen more or less.
 Life thus owned unhappy, is there sup- 50 plemental happiness
 Possible and probable in life to come? or must we count
 Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its whole amount,
 Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow?

Why should I want courage here?
 I will ask and have an answer, — with no favour, with no fear, —
 From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly believe
 True that controverted doctrine? A fact to which I cleave,
 Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips
 Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the soul's eclipse
 Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe and I declare —
 Certain am I — from this life I pass into 60 a better, there
 Where that lady lives of whom enamoured was my soul" — where this
 Other lady, my companion dear and true, she also is?

I have questioned and am answered.

Question, answer presuppose

Two points: that the thing itself which questions, answers, — *is*, it knows;

As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself, — a force

Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its course,

Unaffected by its end, — that this thing likewise needs must be;

Call this — God; then, call that — soul, and both — the only facts for me.

Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such:

Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact as much.

What before caused all the causes, what effect of all effects

10 Haply follows, — these are fancy. Ask the rush if it suspects

Whence and how the stream which floats it had a rise and where and how

Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the rush except that now

Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain than itself,

Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal and shelf

Floats it onward, leaves it — may be — wrecked at last, or lands on shore

There to root again and grow and flourish stable evermore.

— May be! mere surmise not knowledge: much conjecture styled belief,

What the rush conceives the stream means through the voyage blind and brief.

Why, because I doubtless am, shall I as doubtless be? "Because

20 God seems good and wise." Yet under this our life's apparent laws

Reigns a wrong which, righted once, would give quite other laws to life.

"He seems potent." Potent here, then: why are right and wrong at strife?

Has in life the wrong the better? Happily life ends so soon!

Right predominates in life? Then why two lives and double boon?

"Anyhow, we want it: wherefore want?" Because, without the want,

Life, now human, would be brutish: just that hope, however scant,

Makes the actual life worth leading; take the hope therein away,

All we have to do is surely not endure another day.

This life has its hopes for this life, hopes that promise joy: life done —

30 Out of all the hopes, how many had complete fulfilment? none.

"But the soul is not the body:" and the breath is not the flute;

Both together make the music: either marred and all is mute.

Truce to such old sad contention whence, according as we shape

Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-escape:

"We believe" is sighed. I take the cup of comfort proffered thus,

Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and discuss

What their blending may accomplish for the cure of doubt, till — slow,

Sorrowful, but how decided! needs must I o'erturn it — so!

Cause before, effect behind me — blanks! The midway point I am,

Caused, itself — itself efficient: in that 40 narrow space must cram

All experience — out of which there crowds conjecture manifold,

But, as knowledge, this comes only — things may be as I behold,

Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things there are;

I myself am what I know not — ignorance which proves no bar

To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can recognise

What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest — surmise.

If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and what pain, —

Mere surmise: my own experience — that is knowledge, once again!

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated, learnt and taught

This — there is no reconciling wisdom 50 with a world distraught,

Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim,

If — (to my own sense, remember! though none other feel the same!) —

If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,

And life, time, — with all their chances, changes, — just probation-space,

Mine, for me. But those apparent other mortals — theirs, for them?

Knowledge stands on my experience: all outside its narrow hem,

Free surmise may sport and welcome! Pleasures, pains affect mankind

Just as they affect myself? Why, here's my neighbour colour-blind,

Eyes like mine to all appearance: "green as grass" do I affirm?

"Red as grass" he contradicts me: which 60 employs the proper term?

Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for referee,

How should I distinguish? just so, God must judge 'twixt man and me.

To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,

Pain and pleasure no more tally in our
 sense than red and green;
 Still, without what seems such mortal's
 pleasure, pain, my life were lost
 — Life, my whole sole chance to prove —
 although at man's apparent cost —
 What is beauteous and what ugly, right to
 strive for, right to shun,
 Fit to help and fit to hinder, — prove my
 forces everyone,
 Good and evil, — learn life's lesson, hate
 of evil, love of good,
 As 'tis set me, understand so much as may
 be understood —
 Solve the problem: "From thine appre-
 hended scheme of things, deduce
 Praise or blame of its contriver, shown a
 niggard or profuse
 In each good or evil issue! nor miscal-
 culate alike
 Counting one the other in the final bal-
 ance, which to strike,
 Soul was born and life allotted: ay, the
 show of things unfurled
 For thy summing-up and judgment, —
 thine, no other mortal's world!"

What though fancy scarce may grapple
 with the complex and immense
 — "His own world for every mortal?"
 Postulate omnipotence!
 Limit power, and simple grows the com-
 plex: shrunk to atom size,
 That which loomed immense to fancy low
 before my reason lies, —
 I survey it and pronounce it work like
 other work: success
 Here and there, the workman's glory, —
 here and there, his shame no less,
 Failure as conspicuous. Taunt not "Hu-
 man work a-pe work divine?"
 As the power, expect performance! God's
 be God's as mine is mine!
 God whose power made man and made
 man's wants, and made, to meet
 those wants,
 Heaven and earth which, through the body,
 prove the spirit's ministrants,
 Excellently all, — did He lack power or
 was the will in fault
 When He let blue heaven be shrouded
 o'er by vapours of the vault,
 Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at
 the first infecting breath
 Of the serpent pains which herald, swarm-
 ing in, the dragon death?
 What, no way but this that man may learn
 and lay to heart how rife
 Life were with delights would only death
 allow their taste to life?
 Must the rose sigh "Pluck — I perish!"
 must the eve weep "Gaze — I fade!"
 — Every sweet warn "Ware my bitter!"
 every shine bid "Wait my shade"?

Can we love but on condition, that the thing
 we love must die?
 Needs there groan a world in anguish just
 to teach us sympathy —
 Multitudinously wretched that we,
 wretched too, may guess
 What a preferable state were universal
 happiness?
 Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of
 that power which went
 To the making of the worm there in yon
 clod its tenement,
 Any more than I distinguish aught of that
 which, wise and good,
 Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture,
 dropped the dew, its finless food.
 Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it
 holds illusion mere,
 Only a machine for teaching love and hate
 and hope and fear
 To myself, the sole existence, single truth
 mid falsehood, — well!
 If the harsh throes of the prelude die not
 off into the swell
 Of that perfect piece they sting me to
 become a-strain for, — if
 Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead
 not to the last of cliff,
 First of level country, where is sward my
 pilgrim-foot can prize, —
 Plainlier! if this life's conception new life
 fail to realise, —
 Though earth burst and proved a bubble
 glassing hues of hell, one huge
 Reflex of the devil's doings — God's work
 by no subterfuge —
 (So death's kindly touch informed me as 50
 it broke the glamour, gave
 Soul and body both release from life's long
 nightmare in the grave)
 Still, — with no more Nature, no more
 Man as riddle to be read,
 Only my own joys and sorrows now to
 reckon real instead, —
 I must say — or chke in silence —
 "Howsoever came my fate,
 Sorrow did and joy did nowise, — life well
 weighed, — preponderate."
 By necessity ordained thus? I shall bear
 as best I can;
 By a cause all-good, all-wise, all-potent?
 No, as I am man!
 Such were God: and was it goodness that
 the good within my range
 Or had evil in admixture or grew evil's
 self by change?
 Wisdom — that becoming wise meant 60
 making slow and sure advance
 From a knowledge proved in error to ac-
 knowledged ignorance?
 Power? 'tis just the main assumption
 reason most revolts at! power
 Unavailing for bestowment on its creature
 of an hour,

Man, of so much proper action rightly
aimed and reaching aim,
So much passion, — no defect there, no excess,
but still the same, —
As what constitutes existence, pure perfection
bright as brief
For yon worm, man's fellow-creature, on
yon happier world — its leaf!
No, as I am man, I mourn the poverty I
must impute:
Goodness, wisdom, power, all bounded,
each a human attribute!

But, O world outspread beneath me! only
for myself I speak,
Nowise dare to play the spokesman for my
brothers strong and weak,
Full and empty, wise and foolish, good
and bad, in every age,
10 Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in
one or other stage
Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched
on dung and crazed with blains
— Wherefore? whereto? ask the whirlwind
what the dread voice thence explains!
I shall "vindicate no way of God's to
man," nor stand apart,
"Laugh, be candid!" while I watch it
traversing the human heart.
Traversed heart must tell its story un-
commented on: no less
Mine results in "Only grant a second life, I
acquiesce
In this present life as failure, count mis-
fortune's worst assaults
Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so
much the more exalts
Gain about to be. For at what moment
did I so advance
20 Near to knowledge as when frustrate of es-
cape from ignorance?
Did not beauty prove most precious when
its opposite obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever
potent because falsehood reigned?
While for love — Oh how but, losing loves,
does whoso loves succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe —
learning what is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high
through death her cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge,
life's loss drop by drop distilled,
I shall boast it mine — the balsam, bless
each kindly wrench that wrung
From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped
the root whence pleasure sprung,
Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and
bruised the berry, left all grace
30 Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed
elixir in its place!

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was
'ware of — not your worth

— That I knew, my heart assures me —
but of what a shade on earth
Would the passage from my presence of
the tall white figure throw
O'er the ways we walked together!
Somewhat narrow, somewhat slow
Used to seem the ways, the walking: nar-
row ways are well to tread
When there's moss beneath the foot-
step, honeysuckle overhead:
Walking slow to beating bosom surest
solace soonest gives,
Liberates the brain o'erloaded — best of
all restoratives.
Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon
or late converged
Ways though winding? — world-wide 44
heaven-high sea where music slept or
surged
As the angel had ascendant, and Bee-
thoven's Titan mace
Smote the immense to storm, Mozart
would by a finger's lifting chase?
Yes, I knew — but not with knowledge
such as thrills me while I view
Yonder precinct which henceforward
holds and hides the Dear and True.
Grant me (once again) assurance we shall
each meet each some day,
Walk — but with how bold a footstep!
on a way — but what a way!
— Worst were best, defeat were triumph,
utter loss were utmost gain.
Can it be, and must, and will it?

Silence! Out of fact's domain,
Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and
also fear — dispute
Fact's inexorable ruling "Outside fact 54
surmise be mute!"
Well!

Ay, well and best, if fact's self I
may force the answer from!
'Tis surmise I stop the mouth of. Not
above in yonder dome
All a rapture with its rose-glow, — not
around, where pile and peak
Strainingly await the sun's fall, — not be-
neath, where crickets creak,
Birds assemble for their bed-time, soft the
tree-top swell subside, —
No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self
the knowledge hides.
Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of
trust
— Now the ready "Man were wronged
else," now the rash "and God un-
just" —
None of these I need. Take thou, my
soul, thy solitary stand,
Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, 64
as on either hand

Amicable war they wage and play the foe
in thy behoof!
Fancy thrust and Reason parry! Thine
the prize who stand aloof.

FANCY.

I concede the thing refused: henceforth
no certainty more plain
Than this mere surmise that after body
dies soul lives again.
Two, the only facts acknowledged late,
are now increased to three —
God is, and the soul is, and, as certain,
after death shall be.
Put this third to use in life, the time for
using fact!

REASON.

I do:

Find it promises advantage, coupled with
the other two.
Life to come will be improvement on the
life that's now; destroy
Body's thwartings, there's no longer screen
betwixt soul and soul's joy.
Why should we expect new hindrance,
novel tether? In this first
Life, I see the good of evil, why our world
began at worst:
Since time means amelioration, tardily
enough displayed,
Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly
retrograde.
We know more though we know little, we
grow stronger though still weak,
Partly see though all too purblind, stammer
though we cannot speak.
There is no such grudge in God as scared
the ancient Greek, no fresh
Substitute of trap for dragnet, once a
breakage in the mesh.
Dragons were, and serpents are, and blind-
worms will be: ne'er emerged
Any new-created python for man's plague
since earth was purged.
Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to
replace the old,
O'er this life the next presents advantage
much and manifold:
Which advantage — in the absence of a
fourth and farther fact
Now conceivably surmised, of harm to
follow from the act —
I pronounce for man's obtaining at this
moment. Why delay?
Is he happy? happiness will change: an-
ticipate the day!
Is he sad? there's ready refuge: of all
sadness death's prompt cure!
Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a
burthen to endure!
Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures
stinted in the dole,

Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, 3c
all halved and nothing whole,
Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced
back by as idle fears —
What a load he stumbles under through
his glad sad seventy years,
When a touch sets right the turmoil, lifts
his spirit where, flesh-freed,
Knowledge shall be rightly named so, all
that seems be truth indeed!
Grant his forces no accession, nay, no
faculty's increase,
Only let what now exists continue, let him
prove in peace
Power whereof the interrupted unperfected
play enticed
Man through darkness; which to lighten
any spark of hope sufficed, —
What shall then deter his dying out of
darkness into light?
Death itself perchance, brief pain that's 4c
pang, condensed and infinite?
But at worst, he needs must brave it one
day, while, at best, he laughs —
Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not
death his science quaffs!
Any moment claims more courage when,
by crossing cold and gloom,
Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for
the provided room
Where the old friends want their fellow,
where the new acquaintance wait,
Probably for talk assembled, possibly to
sup in state!
I affirm and re-affirm it therefore: only
make as plain
As that man now lives, that, after dying,
man will live again, —
Make as plain the absence, also, of a law
to contravene
Voluntary passage from this life to that by 5c
change of scene, —
And I bid him — at suspicion of first cloud
athwart his sky,
Flower's departure, frost's arrival — never
hesitate, but die!

FANCY.

Then I double my concession: grant,
along with new life sure,
This same law found lacking now: ordain
that, whether rich or poor
Present life is judged in aught man counts
advantage — be it hope,
Be it fear that brightens, blackens most
or least his horoscope, —
He, by absolute compulsion such as made
him live at all,
Go on living to the fated end of life what-
e'er befall.
What though, as on earth he darkling
grovels, man descry the sphere,

Next life's — call it, heaven of freedom,
close above and crystal-clear?
He shall find — say, hell to punish who in
aught curtails the term,
Fain would act the butterfly before he has
played out the worm.
God, soul, earth, heaven, hell, — five facts
now: what is to desiderate?

REASON.

Nothing! Henceforth man's existence
bows to the monition "Wait!
Take the joys and bear the sorrows —
neither with extreme concern!
Living here means nescience simply: 'tis
next life that helps to learn.
Shut those eyes, next life will open, — stop
those ears, next life will teach
Hearing's office, — close those lips, next
life will give the power of speech!
10 Or, if action more amuse thee than the
passive attitude,
Bravely bustle through thy being, busy
thee for ill or good,
Reap this life's success or failure! Soon
shall things be unperplexed
And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie
unravell'd in the next."

FANCY.

Not so fast! Still more concession! not
alone do I declare
Life must needs be borne, — I also will
that man become aware
Life has worth incalculable, every moment
that he spends
So much gain or loss for that next life
which on this life depends.
Good, done here, be there rewarded, —
evil, worked here, there amerced!
Six facts now, and all established, plain to
man the last as first.

REASON.

20 There was good and evil, then, defined to
man by this decree?
Was — for at its promulgation both alike
have ceased to be.
Prior to this last announcement "Certainly
as God exists,
As He made man's soul, as soul is quenches
less by the deathly mists,
Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature
escape from time
To eternity's provided purer air and
brighter clime, —
Just so certainly depends it on the use to
which man turns
Earth, the good or evil done there, whether
after death he earns
Life eternal, — heaven, the phrase be, or
eternal death, — say, hell.

As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing
ill or doing well!"
— Prior to this last announcement, earth 34
was man's probation-place:
Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good
a grace;
Once lay down the law, with Nature's
simple "Such effects succeed
Causes such, and heaven or hell depends
upon man's earthly deed
Just as surely as depends the straight or
else the crooked line
On his making point meet point or with or
else without incline," —
Thenceforth neither good nor evil does
man, doing what he must.
Lay but down that law as stringent
"Wouldst thou live again, be just!"
As this other "Wouldst thou live now,
regularly draw thy breath!
For, suspend the operation, straight law's
breach results in death —"
And (provided always, man, addressed this 40
mode, be sound and sane)
Prompt and absolute obedience, never
doubt, will law obtain!
Tell not me "Look round us! nothing
each side but acknowledged law,
Now styled God's — now, Nature's edict!"
Where's obedience without flaw
Paid to either? What's the adage
rife in man's mouth? Why, "The
best
I both see and praise, the worst I follow"
— which, despite professed
Seeing, praising, all the same he follows,
since he disbelieves
In the heart of him that edict which for
truth his head receives.
There's evading and persuading and much
making law amends
Somehow, there's the nice distinction 'twixt
fast foes and faulty friends,
— Any consequence except inevitable 50
death when "Die,
Whoso breaks our law!" they publish,
God and Nature equally.
Law that's kept or broken — subject to
man's will and pleasure! Whence?
How comes law to bear eluding? Not
because of impotence:
Certain laws exist already which to hear
means to obey;
Therefore not without a purpose these man
must, while those man may
Keep and, for the keeping, happily gain
approval and reward.
Break through this last superstructure, all
is empty air — no sward
Firm like my first fact to stand on "God
there is, and soul there is,"
And soul's earthly life-allotment: wherein,
by hypothesis,

Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and exercise
Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educating fit surmise,
Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, "Does the scope
Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or hope?"

Thus have we come back full circle: fancy's footsteps one by one
Go their round conducting reason to the point where they begun,
Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True! When, half a week

Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how suffused a cheek
You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush into the smile

10 By some word like "Idly argued! you know better all the while!"

Now, from me — Oh not a blush but, how much more, a joyous glow,
Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your "Yes, better I do know"

Break, my warrant for assurance! which assurance may not be

If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change this life to me.

So, I hope — no more than hope, but hope — no less than hope, because

I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent laws,

How I may in any instance fix where change should meetly fall

Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all:

— Which again involves as utter change in life thus law-released,

20 Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill of evil ceased.

Whereas, life and laws apparent re-in-stated, — all we know,

All we know not, — o'er our heaven again cloud closes, until, lo —

Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its gloom, compelled

By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else beheld,

I behold in life, so — hope!

Sad summing-up of all to say!

Athanasius contra mundum, why should he hope more than they?

So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic virtue darts

From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting hearts!

Here I stand, methinks a stone's throw from yon village I this morn

30 Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its forlorn

Tenement's ignoble fortune: through a crevice, plain its floor

Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap blocked the door.

In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof, arose,

Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul — Rousseau's.

Turn thence! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the lake?

There I plucked a leaf, one week since, — ivy, plucked for Byron's sake.

Famed unfortunates! And yet, because of that phosphoric fame

Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity looked flame,

All the world was witched: and wherefore? what could lie beneath, allure

Heart of man to let corruption serve man's 41 head as cynosure?

Was the magic in the dictum "All that's good is gone and past;

Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst of all comes last:

Which believe — for I believe it?" So preached one his gospel-news;

While melodious moaned the other "Dying day with dolphin-hues!

Storm, for loveliness and darkness like a woman's eye! Ye mounts

Where I climb to 'scape my fellow, and thou sea wherein he counts

Not one inch of vile dominion! What were your especial worth

Failed ye to enforce the maxim 'Of all objects found on earth

Man is meanest, much too honoured when compared with — what by odds

Beats him — any dog: so, let him go 50 a-howling to his gods!

Which believe — for I believe it!" such the comfort man received

Sadly since perforce he must: for why? the famous bard believed!

Fame! Then, give me fame, a moment! As I gather at a glance

Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,

Let me grasp them all together, hold on high and brandish well

Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether heaven or hell

Send the dazzling summons earthward, to submit itself the same,

Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on face by — Fame!

Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant torch I wave!

Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late 63 with sky for architrave?

This the trunk, the central solid knowledge, kindled core, began

Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-
 heights, rooted yonder at Lausanne.
 This which flits and spits, the aspic, —
 sparkles in and out the boughs
 Now, and now condensed, the python,
 coiling round and round allows
 Scarce the bole its due effulgence, dulled
 by flake on flake of Wit —
 Laughter so bejewels Learning, — what
 but Ferney nourished it?
 Nay, nor fear — since every resin feeds the
 flame — that I dispense
 With yon Bossex terebinth-tree's all-
 explosive Eloquence:
 No, be sure! nor, any more than thy re-
 splendency, Jean-Jacques,
 Dare I want thine, Diodati! What though
 monkeys and macaques
 10 Gibber "Byron"? Byron's ivy rears a
 branch beyond the crew,
 Green for ever, no deciduous trash ma-
 caques and monkeys chew!
 As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron
 prime in poet's power, —
 Detonations, fulgurations, smiles — the
 rainbow, tears — the shower, —
 Lo, I lift the coruscating marvel — Fame!
 and, famed, declare
 — Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty
 as wit's self Voltaire . . .
 O the sorriest of conclusions to whatever
 man of sense
 Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no
 flare for evidence!
 Yet the millions have their portion, live
 their calm or troublous day,
 Find significance in fireworks: so, by help
 of mine, they may

Confidently lay to heart and lock in head 20
 their life long — this:
 "He there with the brand flamboyant,
 broad o'er night's forlorn abyss,
 Crowned by prose and verse; and wield-
 ing, with Wit's bauble, Learning's
 rod" . . .
 Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul,
 was very sure of God.

So the poor smile played, that evening:
 pallid smile long since extinct
 Here in London's mid-November! Not
 so loosely thoughts were linked,
 Six weeks since as I, descending in the
 sunset from Salève,
 Found the chain, I seemed to forge there,
 flawless till it reached your grave, —
 Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it
 in my breast
 Safe thus far. And since I found a some-
 thing in me would not rest
 Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle 30
 of the chain,
 — Here it lies, for much or little! I have
 lived all o'er again
 That last pregnant hour: I saved it, just
 as I could save a root
 Disinterred for re-interment when the time
 best helps to shoot.
 Life is stocked with germs of torpid life;
 but may I never wake
 Those of mine whose resurrection could
 not be without earthquake!
 Rest all such, unraised for ever! Be this,
 sad yet sweet, the sole
 Memory evoked from slumber! Least
 part this: then what the whole?

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.

1878.

[Poet Number One is *René Gentilhomme*, page to the Prince of Condé, whose chance of succession to the French throne was spoilt by Anne of Austria giving birth to a dauphin. The poem partly turns on this incident. Poet Number Two is *Maillard*, who managed to make Voltaire look foolish in the circumstances narrated in this poem.]

I.

SUCH a starved bank of moss
Till that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born!

II.

Sky — what a scowl of cloud
Till, near and far,
Ray on ray split the shroud
Splendid, a star!

III.

World — how it walled about
Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out:
That was thy face!

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.

I.

"FAME!" Yes, I said it and you read it.
First,
Praise the good log-fire! Winter howls
without.
Crowd closer, let us! Ha, the secret
nursed
Inside yon hollow, crusted roundabout
With copper where the clamp was, — how
the burst
Vindicates flame the stealthy feeder!
Spout
Thy splendidest — a minute and no more?
So soon again all sobered as before?

II.

Nay, for I need to see your face! One
stroke
Adroitly dealt, and lo, the pomp re-
vealed!
Fire in his pandemonium, heart of oak
Palatial, where he wrought the works
concealed
Beneath the solid-seeming roof I broke,
As redly up and out and off they reeled
Like disconcerted imps, those thousand
sparks
From fire's slow tunnelling of vaults and
arcs!

III.

Up, out, and off, see! Were you never
used, —
You now, in childish days or rather 30
nights, —
As I was, to watch sparks fly? not amused
By that old nurse-taught game which
gave the sprites
Each one his title and career, — confused
Belief 'twas all long over with the flights
From earth to heaven of hero, sage and
bard,
And bade them once more strive for Fame's
award?

IV.

New long bright life! and happy chance
befell —
That I know — when some prematurely
lost
Child of disaster bore away the bell
From some too-pampered son of fortune, 40
crossed
Never before my chimney broke the spell!
Octogenarian Keats gave up the ghost,
While — never mind Who was it com-
bered earth —
Sank stifled, span-long brightness, in the
birth.

V.

Well, try a variation of the game!
Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.
There's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone
flame,
That crimson-curly spiral proves the
hulk
Was saturate with — ask the chloride's
name
From somebody who knows! I shall 50
not sulk
If yonder greenish tonguelet licked from
brass
Its life, I thought was fed on copperas.

VI.

Anyhow, there they flutter! What may be
The style and prowess of that purple
one?
Who is the hero other eyes shall see
Than yours and mine? That yellow
deep to dun—

Conjecture how the sage glows, whom not
we
But those unborn are to get warmth by!
Son
O' the coal, — as Job and Hebrew name a
spark, —
What bard, in thy red soaring, scares the
dark?

VII.

Oh and the lesser lights, the dearer still
That they elude a vulgar eye, give ours
The glimpse repaying astronomic skill
Which searched sky deeper, passed those
patent powers
Constellate proudly, — swords, scrolls,
harps, that fill
10 The vulgar eye to surfeit, — found best
flowers
Hid deepest in the dark, — named un-
plucked grace
Of soul, ungathered beauty, form or face!

VIII.

Up with thee, mouldering ash men never
knew,
But I know! flash thou forth, and figure
bold,
Calm and columnar as yon flame I view!
Oh and I bid thee, — to whom fortune
doled
Scantly all other gifts out — bicker blue,
Beauty for all to see, zinc's uncontrolled
Flake-brilliance! Not my fault if these
were shown,
20 Grandeur and beauty both, to me alone.

IX.

No! as the first was boy's play, this proves
mere
Stripling's amusement: manhood's sport
be grave!
Choose rather sparkles quenched in mid
career,
Their boldness and their brightness
could not save
(In some old night of time on some lone
drear
Sea-coast, monopolised by crag or cave)
— Save from ignoble exit into smoke,
Silence, oblivion, all death-damps that
choke!

X.

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once
adrift
30 In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,
We both know well! Where uncouth
tribes made shift
Long since to just keep life in, billows
dash
Nigh over folk who shudder at each lift
Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-
lash

Though they have built the serviceable
town
Tempests but tease now, billows drench,
not drown.

XI.

Croisic, the spit of sandy rock which juts
Spitefully northward, bears nor tree nor
shrub
To tempt the ocean, show what Guérande
shuts
Behind her, past wild Batz whose
Saxons grub
The ground for crystals grown where ocean
gluts
Their promontory's breadth with salt:
all stub
Of rock and stretch of sand, the land's last
strife
To rescue a poor remnant for dear life.

XII.

And what life! Here was, from the world
to choose,
The Druids' chosen chief of homes: they
reared
— Only their women, — mid the slush and
ooze
Of yon low islet, — to their sun, revered
In strange stone guise, — a temple. May-
dawn dews
Saw the old structure levelled; when
there peered
May's earliest eve-star, high and wide once
more
Up towered the new pile perfect as before:

XIII.

Seeing that priestesses — and all were
such —
Unbuilt and then rebuilt it every May,
Each alike helping — well, if not too much!
For, mid their eagerness to outstrip day
And get work done, if any loosed her clutch
And let a single stone drop, straight a
prey
Herself fell, torn to pieces, limb from limb,
By sisters in full chorus glad and grim.

XIV.

And still so much remains of that grey cult,
That even now, of nights, do women
steal
To the sole Menhir standing, and insult
The antagonistic church-spire by ap-
peal
To power discrowned in vain, since each
adult
Believes the gruesome thing she clasps
may heal
Whatever plague no priestly help can cure:
Kiss but the cold stone, the event is sure!

XV.

Nay more: on May-morns, that primeval
rite
Of temple-building, with its punishment
For rash precipitation, lingers, spite
Of all remonstrance; vainly are they
shent,
Those girls who form a ring and, dressed
in white,
Dance round it, till some sister's strength
be spent:
Touch but the Menhir, straight the rest
turn roughs
From gentles, fall on her with fisticuffs.

XVI.

Oh and, for their part, boys from door to
door
Sing unintelligible words to tunes
As obsolete: "scraps of Druidic lore,"
Sigh scholars, as each pale man impor-
tunes
Vainly the mumbling to speak plain once
more.
Enough of this old worship, rounds and
runes!
They serve my purpose, which is but to
show
Croisic to-day and Croisic long ago.

XVII.

What have we sailed to see, then, wafted
there
By fancy from the log that ends its days
Of much adventure 'neath skies foul or
fair,
On waters rough or smooth, in this good
blaze
We two crouch round so closely, bidding
care
Keep outside with the snow-storm?
Something says
"Fit time for story-telling!" I begin—
Why not at Croisic, port we first put in?

XVIII.

Anywhere serves: for point me out the
place
Wherever man has made himself a home,
And there I find the story of our race
In little, just at Croisic as at Rome.
What matters the degree? the kind I trace.
30 Druids their temple, Christians have
their dome:
So with mankind; and Croisic, I'll engage,
With Rome yields sort for sort, in age for
age.

XIX.

No doubt, men vastly differ: and we need
Some strange exceptional benevolence
Of nature's sunshine to develop seed

So well, in the less-favoured clime, that
thence
We may discern how shrub means tree
indeed
Though dwarfed till scarcely shrub in
evidence.
Man in the ice-house or the hot-house ranks
With beasts or gods: stove-forced, give 40
warmth the thanks!

XX.

While, is there any ice-checked? Such
shall learn
I am thankworthy, who propose to slake
His thirst for tasting how it feels to turn
Cedar from hyssop-on-the-wall. I wake
No memories of what is harsh and stern
In ancient Croisic-nature, much less rake
The ashes of her last warmth till out leaps
Live Hervé Riel, the single spark she keeps.

XXI.

Take these two, see, each outbreak, —
spirt and spirt
Of fire from our brave billet's either 50
edge
Which — call maternal Croisic ocean-girt!
These two shall thoroughly redeem my
pledge.
One flames fierce gules, its feebler rival —
vert,
Heralds would tell you: heroes, I allege,
They both were: soldiers, sailors, states-
men, priests,
Lawyers, physicians — guess what gods or
beasts!

XXII.

None of them all, but — poets, if you
please!
"What, even there, endowed with knack
of rhyme,
Did two among the aborigines
Of that rough region pass the ungracious 60
time
Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea's,
The songs forbidden a serener clime?
Or had they universal audience — that's
To say, the folk of Croisic, ay and Batz?"

XXIII.

Open your ears! Each poet in his day
Had such a mighty moment of success
As pinnaced him straight, in full display,
For the whole world to worship —
nothing less!
Was not the whole polite world Paris,
pray?
And did not Paris, for one moment — 70
yes,
Worship these poet-flames, our red and
green,
One at a time, a century between?

XXIV.

And yet you never heard their names!

Assist,
Clio, Historic Muse, while I record
Great deeds! Let fact, not fancy, break
the mist

And bid each sun emerge, in turn play
lord

Of day, one moment! Hear the annalist
Tell a strange story, true to the least
word!

At Croisic, sixteen hundred years and ten
Since Christ, forth flamed yon liquid ruby,
then.

XXV.

Know him henceforth as René Gentil-
homme

10 — Appropriate appellation! noble birth
And knightly blazon, the device where-
from

Was "Better do than say"! In Croisic's
dearth

Why prison his career while Christendom
Lay open to reward acknowledged
worth?

He therefore left it at the proper age
And got to be the Prince of Condé's page.

XXVI.

Which Prince of Condé, whom men called
"The Duke,"

— Failing the king, his cousin, of an heir,
(As one might hold would hap, without
rebuke,

20 Since Anne of Austria, all the world was
'ware,

Twenty-three years long sterile, scarce
could look

For issue) — failing Louis of so rare
A godsend, it was natural the Prince
Should hear men call him "Next King"
too, nor wince.

XXVII.

Now, as this reasonable hope, by growth
Of years, nay, tens of years, locked
plump almost

To bursting, — would the brothers, child-
less both,

Louis and Gaston, give but up the
ghost —

Condé, called "Duke" and "Next King,"
nothing loth

30 Awaited his appointment to the post,
And wiled away the time, as best he might,
Till Providence should settle things aright.

XXVIII.

So, at a certain pleasure-house, withdrawn
From cities where a whisper breeds
offence,

He sat him down to watch the streak of
dawn

Testify to first stir of Providence;
And, since dull country life makes courtiers
yawn,

There wanted not a poet to dispense
Song's remedy for spleen-fits all and some,
Which poet was Page René Gentilhomme. 44

XXIX.

A poet born and bred, his very sire

A poet also, author of a piece
Printed and published, "Ladies — their
attire;"

Therefore the son, just born at his
decease,

Was bound to keep alive the sacred fire,
And kept it, yielding moderate increase
Of songs and sonnets, madrigals, and much
Rhyming thought poetry and praised as
such.

XXX.

Rubbish unutterable (bear in mind!)

Rubbish not wholly without value, 50
though,

Being to compliment the Duke designed

And bring the complimenter credit so, —
Pleasure with profit happily combined.

Thus René Gentilhomme rhymed,
rhymed till — lo,

This happened, as he sat in an alcove
Elaborating rhyme for "love" — *not*
"dove."

XXXI.

He was alone: silence and solitude

Befit the votary of the Muse. Around,
Nature — not our new picturesque and
rude,

But trim tree-cinctured stately garden- 60
ground —

Breathed polish and politeness. All-
imbued

With these, he sat absorbed in one pro-
found

Excogitation "Were it best to hint
Or boldly boast 'She loves me, — Ara-
minte?'"

XXXII.

When suddenly flashed lightning, searing
sight

Almost, so close to eyes; then, quick on
flash,

Followed the thunder, splitting earth down-
right

Where René sat a-rhyming: with huge
crash

Of marble into atoms infinite —

Marble which, stately, dared the world 70
to dash

The stone-thing proud, high-pillared, from
its place:

One flash, and dust was all that lay at base.

XXXIII.

So, when the horrible confusion loosed
 Its wrappage round his senses, and, with
 breath,
 Seeing and hearing by degrees induced
 Conviction what he felt was life, not
 death —
 His fluttered faculties came back to roost
 One after one, as fowls do: ay, beneath,
 About his very feet there, lay in dust
 Earthly presumption paid by heaven's dis-
 gus!

XXXIV.

For, what might be the thunder-smitten
 thing
 But, pillared high and proud, in marble
 guise,
 A ducal crown — which meant "Now
 Duke: Next, King"?
 Since such the Prince was, not in his
 own eyes
 Alone, but all the world's. Pebble from
 sling
 Prostrates a giant; so can pulverise
 Marble pretension — how much more,
 make moult
 A peacock-prince his plume — God's
 thunderbolt.

XXXV.

That was enough for René, that first fact
 Thus flashed into him. Up he looked:
 all blue
 And bright the sky above; earth firm,
 compact
 Beneath his footing, lay apparent too;
 Opposite stood the pillar: nothing lacked
 There, but the Duke's crown: see, its
 fragments strew
 The earth, — about his feet lie atoms fine
 Where he sat nursing late his fourteenth
 line!

XXXVI.

So, for the moment, all the universe
 Being abolished, all 'twixt God and
 him, —
 Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its
 curse,
 Of one and the same value, — to the
 brim
 Flooded with truth for better or for
 worse, —
 He pounces on the writing-paper, prim,
 Keeping its place on table: not a dint
 Nor speck had damaged "Ode to Ara-
 minte."

XXXVII.

And over the neat crowquill calligraph
 His pen goes blotting, blurring, as an ox
 Tramples a flower-bed in a garden, —
 laugh

You may! — so does not he, whose
 quick heart knocks
 Audibly at his breast: an epitaph
 On earth's break-up, amid the falling
 rocks,
 He might be penning in a wild dismay,
 Caught with his work half-done on Judg- 40
 ment Day.

XXXVIII.

And what is it so terribly he pens,
 Ruining "Cupid, Venus, wile and smile,
 Hearts, darts," and all his day's *divinior*
mens
 Judged necessary to a perfect style?
 Little recks René, with a breast to cleanse,
 Of Rhadamanthine law that reigned ere-
 while:
 Brimful of truth, truth's outburst will con-
 vince
 (Style or no style) who bears truth's brunt
 — the Prince.

XXXIX.

"Condé, called 'Duke,' be called just
 'Duke,' not more
 To life's end! 'Next King' thou for- 50
 sooth wilt be?
 Ay, when this bauble, as it decked before
 Thy pillar, shall again, for France to see,
 Take its proud station there! Let France
 adore
 No longer an illusive mock-sun — thee —
 But keep her homage for Sol's self, about
 To rise and put pretenders to the rout!

XL.

"What? France so God-abandoned that
 her root
 Regal, though many a Spring it gave no
 sign,
 Lacks power to make the bole, now
 branchless, shoot
 Greenly as ever? Nature, though be- 60
 nign,
 Thwarts ever the ambitious and astute.
 In store for such is punishment condign:
 Sure as thy Duke's crown to the earth was
 hurled,
 So sure, next year, a Dauphin glads the
 world!"

XLI.

Which penned — some forty lines to this
 effect —
 Our René folds his paper, marches brave
 Back to the mansion, luminous, erect,
 Triumphant, an emancipated slave.
 There stands the Prince. "How now?
 My Duke's crown wrecked?
 What may this mean?" The answer 70
 René gave

Was — handing him the verses, with the
due
Incline of body: "Sir, God's word to
you!"

XLII.

The Prince read, paled, was silent; all
around,
The courtier-company, to whom he
passed
The paper, read, in equal silence bound.
René grew also by degrees aghast
At his own fit of courage — palely found
Way of retreat from that pale presence:
classed
Once more among the cony-kind. "Oh,
son,
It is a feeble folk!" saith Solomon.

XLIII.

Vainly he apprehended evil: since,
When, at the year's end, even as fore-
told,
Forth came the Dauphin who discrowned
the Prince
Of that long-craved mere visionary gold,
'Twas no fit time for envy to evince
Malice, be sure! The timidest grew
bold:
Of all that courtier-company not one
But left the semblance for the actual sun.

XLIV.

And all sorts and conditions that stood by
20 At René's burning moment, bright es-
cape
Of soul, bore witness to the prophecy.
Which witness took the customary shape
Of verse; a score of poets in full cry
Hailed the inspired one. Nantes and
Tours agape,
Soon Paris caught the infection; gaining
strength,
How could it fail to reach the Court at
length?

XLV.

"O poet!" smiled King Louis, "and be-
sides,
O prophet! Sure, by miracle an-
nounced,
My babe will prove a prodigy. Who
chides
30 Henceforth the unchilded monarch shall
be trounced

For irreligion: since the fool derides
Plain miracle by which this prophet
pounced

Exactly on the moment I should lift
Like Simeon, in my arms, a babe, 'God's
gift!"

XLVI.

"So call the boy! and call this bard and
seer

By a new title! him I raise to rank
Of 'Royal Poet': poet without peer!
Whose fellows only have themselves to
thank
If humbly they must follow in the rear
My René. He's the master: they must
clank
Their chains of song, confessed his slaves;
for why?
They poetise, while he can prophesy!"

XLVII.

So said, so done; our René rose august,
"The Royal Poet;" straightway put in
type
His poem-prophecy, and (fair and just
Procedure) added, — now that time was
ripe
For proving friends did well his word to
trust, —
Those attestations, turned to lyre or
pipe,
Which friends broke out with when he
dared foretell
The Dauphin's birth: friends trusted, and
did well.

XLVIII.

Moreover he got painted by Du Pré,
Engraved by Daret also, and prefixed
The portrait to his book: a crown of bay
Circled his brows, with rose and myrtle
mixed;
And Latin verses, lovely in their way,
Described him as "the biforked hill be-
twixt:
Since he hath scaled Parnassus at one
jump,
Joining the Delphic quill and Getic
trump."

XLIX.

Whereof came . . . What, it lasts, our
spirt, thus long
— The red fire? That's the reason
must excuse
My letting flicker René's prophet-song
No longer; for its pertinacious hues
Must fade before its fellow joins the throng
Of sparks departed up the chimney, dues
To dark oblivion. At the word, it winks
Rallies, relapses, dwindles, deathwar-
sinks!

L.

So does our poet. All this burst of fam
Fury of favour, Royal Poetship,
Prophetship, book, verse, picture — thereo-
came
— Nothing! That's why I would not let
outstrip
Red his green rival flamelet: just the same
Ending in smoke waits both! In vain
we rip

The past, no further faintest trace remains
Of René to reward our pious pains.

LI.

Somebody saw a portrait framed and
glazed
At Croisic. "Who may be this glorified
Mortal unheard-of hitherto?" amazed
That person asked the owner by his side,
Who proved as ignorant. The question
raised
Provoked inquiry; key by key was tried
On Croisic's portrait-puzzle, till back flew
The wards at one key's touch, which key
was— Who?

LII.

The other famous poet! Wait thy turn,
Thou green, our red's competitor!
Enough
Just now to note 'twas he that itched to
learn
(A hundred years ago) how fate could
puff
Heaven-high (a hundred years before)
then spurn
To suds so big a bubble in some huff:
Since green too found red's portrait, —
having heard
Hitherto of red's rare self not one word.

LIII.

And he with zeal addressed him to the task
Of hunting out, by all and any means,
— Who might the brilliant bard be, born
to bask
Butterfly-like in shine which kings and
queens
And baby-dauphins shed? Much need
to ask!
Is fame so fickle that what perks and
preens
The eyed wing, one imperial minute, dips
Next sudden moment into blind eclipse?

LIV.

After a vast expenditure of pains,
Our second poet found the prize he
sought:
Urged in his search by something that
restrains
From undue triumph famed ones who
have fought,
Or simply, poetising, taxed their brains:
Something that tells such — dear is
triumph bought
If it means only basking in the midst
Of fame's brief sunshine, as thou, René,
didst.

LV.

For, what did searching find at last but
this?

Quoth somebody "I somehow some-
where seem
To think I heard one old De Chevaye is
Or was possessed of René's works!"
which gleam
Of light from out the dark proved not
amiss
To track, by correspondence on the 40
theme;
And soon the twilight broadened into day,
For thus to question answered De Chevaye.

LVI.

"True it is, I did once possess the works
You want account of — works — to call
them so,
Comprised in one small book: the vol-
ume lurks
(Some fifty leaves in *duodecimo*)
'Neath certain ashes which my soul it irks
Still to remember, because long ago
That and my other rare shelf-occupants
Perished by burning of my house at Nante, 50

LVII.

"Yet of that book one strange particular
Still stays in mind with me" — and
thereupon
Followed the story. "Few the poems
are;
The book was two-thirds filled up with
this one,
And sundry witnesses from near and far
That here at least was prophesying done
By prophet, so as to preclude all doubt,
Before the thing he prophesied about."

LVIII.

That's all he knew, and all the poet
learned,
And all that you and I are like to hear 60
Of René; since not only book is burned
But memory extinguished, — nay, I
fear,
Portrait is gone too: nowhere I discerned
A trace of it at Croisic. "Must a tear
Needs fall for that?" you smile. "How
fortune fares
With such a mediocrity, who cares?"

LIX.

Well, I care — intimately care to have
Experience how a human creature felt
In after-life, who bore the burden grave
Of certainly believing God had dealt 70
For once directly with him: did not rave
— A maniac, did not find his reason
melt
— An idiot, but went on, in peace or
strife,
The world's way, lived an ordinary life.

LX.

How many problems that one fact would solve!

An ordinary soul, no more, no less,
About whose life earth's common sights revolve,

On whom is brought to bear, by thunder-stress,

This fact — God tasks him, and will not absolve

Task's negligent performer! Can you guess

How such a soul, — the task performed to point, —

Goes back to life nor finds things out of joint?

LXI.

Does he stand stock-like henceforth? or proceed

10 Dizzily, yet with course straightforward still,

Down-trampling vulgar hindrance? — as the reed

Is crushed beneath its tramp when that blind will

Hatched in some old-world beast's brain bids it speed

Where the sun wants brute-presence to fulfil

Life's purpose in a new far zone, ere ice Enwomb the pasture-tract its fortalice.

LXII.

I think no such direct plain truth consists
With actual sense and thought and what they take

To be the solid walls of life: mere mists —

20 How such would, at that truth's first piercing, break

Into the nullity they are! — slight lists
Wherein the puppet-champions wage, for sake

Of some mock-mistress, mimic war: laid low

At trumpet-blast, there's shown the world, one foe!

LXIII.

No, we must play the pageant out, observe

The tourney-regulations, and regard Success — to meet the blunted spear nor swerve,

Failure — to break no bones yet fall on sword;

Must prove we have — not courage? well then, — nerve!

30 And, at the day's end, boast the crown's award —

Be warranted as promising to wield Weapons, no sham, in a true battle-field.

LXIV.

Meantime, our simulated thunderclaps
Which tell us counterfeited truths — these same

Are — sound, when music storms the soul, perhaps?

— Sight, beauty, every dart of every aim
That touches just, then seems, by strange

relapse,
To fall effectless from the soul it came

As if to fix its own, but simply smote
And startled to vague beauty more re-

mote?

LXV.

So do we gain enough — yet not too much —

Acquaintance with that outer element
Wherein there's operation (call it such!)

Quite of another kind than we the pent
On earth are proper to receive. Our

hutch
Lights up at the least chink: let roof be

rent —
How inmates huddle, blinded at first

spasm,
Cognisant of the sun's self through the

chasm!

LXVI.

Therefore, who knows if this our René's quick

Subsidence from as sudden noise and glare

Into oblivion was impolitic?

No doubt his soul became at once aware
That, after prophecy, the rhyming-trick

Is poor employment: human praises scare

Rather than soothe ears all a-tingle yet
With tones few hear and live, but none

forget.

LXVII.

There's our first famous poet. Step thou forth

Second consummate songster! See, the tongue

Of fire that typifies thee, owns thy worth
In yellow, purple mixed its green among, 6

No pure and simple resin from the North,
But composite with virtues that belong

To Southern culture! Love not more than hate

Helped to a blaze . . . But I anticipate.

LXVIII.

Prepare to witness a combustion rich
And riotously splendid, far beyond

Poor René's lambent little streamer which
Only played candle to a Court grown

fond
By baby-birth: this soared to such a pitch,

Alternately such colours doffed and
donned,
That when I say it dazzled Paris — please
Know that it brought Voltaire upon his
knees!

LXIX.

Who did it, was a dapper gentleman,
Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by
birth,
Whose birth that century ended which
began

By similar bestowment on our earth
Of the aforesaid René. Cease to scan
The ways of Providence! See Croisic's
dearth —

o Not Paris in its plenitude — suffice
To furnish France with her best poet
twice!

LXX.

Till he was thirty years of age, the vein
Poetic yielded rhyme by drops and
spirts:

In verses of society had lain
His talent chiefly; but the Muse as-
serts

Privilege most by treating with disdain
Epics the bard mouths out, or odes he
blurts

Spasmodically forth. Have people time
And patience nowadays for thought in
rhyme?

LXXI.

o So, his achievements were the quatrain's
inch

Of homage, or at most the sonnet's ell
+ If admiration: welded lines with clinch

Of ending word and word, to every belle
In Croisic's bounds; these, brisk as any
linch,

He twittered till his fame had reached
as well

Guérande as Batz; but there fame stopped,
for — curse

On fortune — outside lay the universe!

LXXII.

That's Paris. Well, — why not break
bounds, and send

Song onward till it echo at the gates
o Of Paris whither all ambitions tend,

And end too, seeing that success there
sates

The soul which hungers most for fame?
Why spend

A minute in deciding, while, by Fate's
Decree, there happens to be just the prize
Proposed there, suiting souls that poetise?

LXXIII.

A prize indeed, the Academy's own self
Proposes to what bard shall best indite

A piece describing how, through shoal and
shelf,

The Art of Navigation, steered aright,
Has, in our last king's reign, — the lucky 40
elf, —

Reached, one may say, Perfection's
haven quite,

And there cast anchor. At a glance one
sees

The subject's crowd of capabilities!

LXXIV.

Neptune and Amphitrité! Thetis, who
Is either Tethys or as good — both tag!

Triton can shove along a vessel too:

It's Virgil! Then the winds that blow
or lag,

De Maille, Vendôme, Vermandois! Tou-
louse blew

Longest, we reckon: he must puff the
flag

To fullest outflare; while our lacking 50
nymph

Be Anne of Austria, Regent o'er the lymph!

LXXV.

Promised, performed! Since *irritabilis*
gens

Holds of the feverish impotence that
strives

To stay an itch by prompt resource to
pen's

Scratching itself on paper; placid lives,
Leisurely works mark the *divinior mens*:

Bees brood above the honey in their
hives;

Gnats are the busy bustlers. Splash and
scrawl, —

Completed lay thy piece, swift penman
Paul!

LXXVI.

To Paris with the product! This dis- 60
patched,

One had to wait the Forty's slow and
sure

Verdict, as best one might. Our penman
scratched

Away perforce the itch that knows no
cure

But daily paper-friction: more than
matched

His first feat by a second — tribute pure
And heartfelt to the Forty when their voice
Should peal with one accord "Be Paul our
choice!"

LXXVII.

Scratch, scratch went much laudation of
that sane

And sound Tribunal, delegates august
Of Phœbus and the Muses' sacred train — 70

Whom every poetaster tries to thrust

From where, high-throned, they dominate
the Seine:

Fruitless endeavour, — fail it shall and
must!

Whereof in witness have not one and all
The Forty voices pealed "Our Choice be
Paul"?

LXXVIII.

Thus Paul discounted his applause.
Alack

For human expectation! Scarcely ink
Was dry when, lo, the perfect piece came
back

Rejected, shamed! Some other poet's
clink

"Thetis and Tethys" had seduced the
pack

10 Of pedants to declare perfection's pink
A singularly poor production. "Whew!
The Forty are stark fools, I always knew."

LXXIX.

First fury over (for Paul's race — to-wit,
Brain-vibrios — wriggle clear of proto-
plasm

Into minute life that's one fury-fit),
"These fools shall find a bard's enthu-
siasm

Comports with what should counter-
balance it —

Some knowledge of the world! No
doubt, orgasm

Effects the birth of verse which, born,
demands

20 Prosaic ministration, swaddling-bands!

LXXX.

"Verse must be cared for at this early
stage,

Handled, nay dandled even. I should
play

Their game indeed if, till it grew of age,
I meekly let these dotards frown away

My bantling from the rightful heritage
Of smiles and kisses! Let the public
say

If it be worthy praises or rebukes,
My poem, from these Forty old perukes!"

LXXXI.

So, by a friend, who boasts himself in grace
30 With no less than the Chevalier La
Roque, —

Eminent in those days for pride of place,
Seeing he had it in his power to block

The way or smooth the road to all the
race

Of literators trudging up to knock
At Fame's exalted temple-door — for
why?

He edited the Paris "Mercury": —

LXXXII.

By this friend's help the Chevalier receives
Paul's poem, prefaced by the due ap-
peal

To Cæsar from the Jews. As duly heaves
A sigh the Chevalier, about to deal

With case so customary — turns the leaves,
Finds nothing there to borrow, beg or
steal —

Then brightens up the critic's brow deep-
lined.

"The thing may be so cleverly declined!"

LXXXIII.

Down to desk, out with paper, up with
quill,

Dip and indite! "Sir, gratitude im-
mense

For this true draught from the Pierian rill!
Our Academic clodpoles must be dense
Indeed to stand unirrigated still.

No less, we critics dare not give offence

To grantees like the Forty: while we
mock

We grin and bear. So, here's your piece!
La Roque."

LXXXIV.

"There now!" cries Paul: "the fellow
can't avoid

Confessing that my piece deserves the
palm;

And yet he dares not grant me space en-
joyed

By every scribbler he permits embalm
His crambo in the Journal's corner!

Cloyed

With stuff like theirs, no wonder if a
qualm

Be caused by verse like mine: though
that's no cause

For his defrauding me of just applause. 6

LXXXV.

"Aha, he fears the Forty, this poltroon?
First let him fear *me*! Change smooth
speech to rough!

I'll speak my mind out, show the fellow
soon

Who is the foe to dread: insist enough
On my own merits till, as clear as noon,

He sees I am no man to take rebuff
As patiently as scribblers may and must!

Quick to the onslaught, out sword, cut and
thrust!"

LXXXVI.

And thereupon a fierce epistle flings
Its challenge in the critic's face. Alack!

Our bard mistakes his man! The gaunt-
let rings

On brazen visor proof against attack.

Prompt from his editorial throne up
springs
The insulted magnate, and his mace
falls, thwack,
On Paul's devoted brainpan, — quite
away
From common courtesies of fencing-play!

LXXXVII.

"Sir, will you have the truth? This
piece of yours
Is simply execrable past belief.
I shrank from saying so; but, since nought
cures
Conceit but truth, truth's at your service! Brief,
Just so long as 'The Mercury' endures,
So long are you excluded by its Chief
From corner, nay, from cranny! Play the
cock
O' the roost, henceforth, at Croisic!"
wrote La Roque.

LXXXVIII.

Paul yellowed, whitened, as his wrath from
red
Waxed incandescent. Now, this man
of rhyme
Was merely foolish, faulty in the head
Not heart of him: conceit's a venial
crime.
"Oh by no means malicious!" cousins
said:
Fussily feeble, — harmless all the time,
Piddling at so-called satire — well-ad-
vised,
He held in most awe whom he satirised.

LXXXIX.

Accordingly his kith and kin — removed
From emulation of the poet's gift
By power and will — these rather liked,
nay, loved
The man who gave his family a lift
Out of the Croisic level; "disapproved
Satire so trenchant." Thus our poet
sniffed
Home-incense, though too churlish to un-
lock
The Mercury's" box of ointment was
La Roque.

xc.

But when Paul's visage grew from red to
white,
And from his lips a sort of mumbling fell
Of who was to be kicked, — "And serve
him right" —
A gay voice interposed — "did kicking
well
Answer the purpose! Only — if I might
Suggest as much — a far more potent
spell

Lies in another kind of treatment. Oh,
Women are ready at resource, you know!

XCI.

"Talent should minister to genius! Good:
The proper and superior smile returns.
Hear me with patience! Have you un-
derstood
The only method whereby genius earns 40
Fit guerdon nowadays? In knightly mood
You entered lists with visor up; one
learns
Too late that, had you mounted Roland's
crest,
'Room!' they had roared — La Roque
with all the rest!

XCII.

"Why did you first of all transmit your
piece
To those same priggish Forty unpre-
pared
Whether to rank you with the swans or
geese
By friendly intervention? If they
dared
Count you a cackler, — wonders never
cease!
I think it still more wondrous that you 50
bared
Your brow (my earlier image) as if praise
Were gained by simple fighting nowadays!

XCIII.

"Your next step showed a touch of the
true means
Whereby desert is crowned: not force
but wile
Came to the rescue. 'Get behind the
scenes!'
Your friend advised: he writes, sets
forth your style
And title, to such purpose intervenes
That you get velvet-compliment three-
pile;
And, though 'The Mercury' said 'nay,'
nor stock
Nor stone did his refusal prove La Roque. 60

XCIV.

"Why must you needs revert to the high
hand,
Imperative procedure — what you call
'Taking on merit your exclusive stand'?
Stand, with a vengeance! Soon you
went to wall,
You and your merit! Only fools com-
mand
When folk are free to disobey them,
Paul!
You've learnt your lesson, found out what's
o'clock,
By this uncivil answer of La Roque.

XCV.

"Now let me counsel! Lay this piece on
 self
 — Masterpiece though it be! From
 out your desk
 Hand me some lighter sample, verse the
 elf
 Cupid inspired you with, no god gro-
 tesque
 Presiding o'er the Navy! I myself
 Hand-write what's legible yet pic-
 turesque;
 I'll copy fair and femininely frock
 Your poem masculine that courts La
 Roque!

XCVI.

1 "Deidamia he — Achilles thou!
 10 Ha, ha, these ancient stories come so
 apt!
 My sex, my youth, my rank I next avow
 In a neat prayer for kind perusal.
 Sapped
 I see the walls which stand so stoutly now!
 I see the toils about the game entrapped
 By honest cunning! Chains of lady's-
 smock,
 Not thorn and thistle, tether fast La
 Roque!"

XCVII.

Now, who might be the speaker sweet and
 arch
 That laughed above Paul's shoulder as
 it heaved
 With the indignant heart? — bade steal
 a march
 20 And not continue charging? Who con-
 ceived
 This plan which set our Paul, like pea you
 parch
 On fire-shovel, skipping, of a load re-
 lieved,
 From arm-chair moodiness to *escritoire*
 Sacred to Phœbus and the tuneful choir?

XCVIII.

Who but Paul's sister! named of course
 like him
 "Desforges"; but, mark you, in those
 days a queer
 Custom obtained, — who knows whence
 grew the whim? —
 That people could not read their title
 clear
 To reverence till their own true names,
 made dim
 30 By daily mouthing, pleased to disappear,
 Replaced by brand-new bright ones:
 Arouet,
 For instance, grew Voltaire; Desforges —
 Malcraiz.

XCIX.

"Demoiselle Malcraiz de la Vigne" —
 because
 The family possessed at Brederac
 A vineyard, — few grapes, many hips-and-
 haws, —
 Still a nice Breton name. As breast and
 back
 Of this vivacious beauty gleamed through
 gauze,
 So did her sprightly nature nowise lack
 Lustre when draped, the fashionable way,
 In "Malcraiz de la Vigne" — more short,
 "Malcraiz."

C.

Out from Paul's *escritoire* behold escape
 The hoarded treasure! verse falls
 thick and fast,
 Sonnets and songs of every size and shape.
 The lady ponders on her prize; at last
 Selects one which — Oh angel and yet ape! —
 Her malice thinks is probably surpassed
 In badness by no fellow of the flock,
 Copies it fair, and "Now for my La
 Roque!"

CI.

So, to him goes, with the neat manuscript
 The soft petitionary letter. "Grant
 5 A fledgeling novice that with wing unclipt
 She soar her little circuit, habitant
 Of an old manor; buried in which crypt,
 How can the youthful *châtelaine* but
 pant
 For disemprisonment by one *ad hoc*
 Appointed 'Mercury's' Editor, La
 Roque?"

CII.

'Twas an epistle that might move the
 Turk!
 More certainly it moved our middle-
 aged
 Pen-driver drudging at his weary work,
 Raked the old ashes up and disengaged 6
 The sparks of gallantry which always lurk
 Somehow in literary breasts, assuaged
 In no degree by compliments on style;
 Are Forty wagging beards worth one girl's
 smile?

CIII.

In trips the lady's poem, takes its place
 Of honour in the gratified Gazette,
 With due acknowledgment of power and
 grace;
 Prognostication, too, that higher yet
 The Breton Muse will soar: fresh youth,
 high race,
 Beauty and wealth have amicably met 7
 That Demoiselle Malcraiz may fill the
 chair
 Left vacant by the loss of Deshoulières.

CIV.

"There!" cried the lively lady. "Who was right —
 You in the dumps, or I the merry maid
 Who know a trick or two can baffle spite
 Tenfold the force of this old fool's?
 Afraid
 Of Editor La Roque? But come! next
 flight
 Shall outsoar — Deshoulières alone?
 My blade,
 Sappho herself shall you confess outstript!
 Quick, Paul, another dose of manu-
 script!"

CV.

And so, once well a-foot, advanced the
 game:
 More and more verses, corresponding
 gush
 On gush of praise, till everywhere acclaim
 Rose to the pitch of uproar. "Sappho?
 Tush!
 Sure 'Malcraïs on her Parrot' puts to
 shame
 Deshoulières' pastoral, clay not worth a
 rush
 Beside this find of treasure, gold in crock,
 Unearthed in Brittany, — nay, ask La
 Roque!"

CVI.

Such was the Paris tribute. "Yes," you
 sneer,
 "Ninnies stock Noodledom, but folk
 more sage
 Resist contagious folly, never fear!"
 Do they? Permit me to detach one
 page
 From the huge Album which from far and
 near
 Poetic praises blackened in a rage
 Of rapture! and that page shall be — who
 stares
 Confounded now, I ask you? — just Vol-
 taire's!

CVII.

Ay, sharpest shrewdest steel that ever
 stabbed
 To death Imposture through the armour-
 joints!
 How did it happen that gross Humbug
 grabbed
 Thy weapons, gouged thine eyes out?
 Fate appoints
 That pride shall have a fall, or I had
 blabbed
 Hardly that Humbug, whom thy soul
 aoints,
 Could thus cross-buttock thee caught un-
 awares,
 And dismalest of tumbles proved — Vol-
 taire's!

CVIII.

See his epistle extant yet, wherewith
 "Henri" in verse and "Charles" in
 prose he sent
 To do her suit and service! Here's the
 pith
 Of half a dozen stanzas — stones which
 went
 To build that simulated monolith —
 Sham love in due degree with homage
 blent
 As sham — which in the vast of volumes
 scares
 The traveller still: "That stucco-heap — 46
 Voltaire's?"

CIX.

"Oh thou, whose clarion-voice has over-
 flown
 The wilds to startle Paris that's one ear!
 Thou who such strange capacity hast
 shown
 For joining all that's grand with all
 that's dear,
 Knowledge with power to please — Des-
 houlières grown
 Learned as Dacier in thy person! mere
 Weak fruit of idle hours, these crabs of
 mine
 I dare lay at thy feet, O Muse divine!

CX.

"Charles was my taskwork only; Henri
 trod
 My hero erst; and now, my heroine — she 50
 Shall be thyself! True — is it true, great
 God?
 Certainly love henceforward must not
 be!
 Yet all the crowd of Fine Arts fail — how
 odd! —
 Tried turn by turn, to fill a void in me!
 There's no replacing love with these, alas!
 Yet all I can I do to prove no ass.

CXI.

"I labour to amuse my freedom; but
 Should any sweet young creature slavery
 preach,
 And — borrowing thy vivacious charm, the
 slut! —
 Make me, in thy engaging words, a 60
 speech,
 Soon should I see myself in prison shut
 With all imaginable pleasure." Reach
 The washhand-basin for admirers! There's
 A stomach-moving tribute — and Vol-
 taire's!

CXII.

Suppose it a fantastic billet-doux,
 Adulatory flourish, not worth frown!
 What say you to the Fathers of Trévoux?

These in their Dictionary have her down
Under the heading "Author": "Malcraï,
too,

Is 'Author' of much verse that claims
renown."

While Jean-Baptiste Rousseau . . . but
why proceed?

Enough of this — something too much,
indeed!

CXIII.

At last La Roque, unwilling to be left

Behindhand in the rivalry, broke
bounds

Of figurative passion; hilt and heft,

Plunged his huge downright love through
what surrounds

10 The literary female bosom; reft

Away its veil of coy reserve with
"Zounds!

I love thee, Breton Beauty! All's no use!
Body and soul I love, — the big word's
loose!"

CXIV.

He's greatest now and to de-struc-ti-on

Nearest. Attend the solemn word I
quote,

O'Paul! *There's no pause at per-fec-ti-on.*

Thus knolls thy knell the Doctor's
bronzed throat!

Greatest a period hath, no sta-ti-on!

Better and truer verse none ever wrote

20 (Despite the antique outstretched *a-i-on*)

Than thou, revered and magisterial
Donne!

CXV.

Flat on his face, La Roque, and, — pressed
to heart

His dexter hand, — Voltaire with bended
knee!

Paul sat and sucked-in triumph; just
apart

Leaned over him his sister. "Well!"
smirks he,

And "Well?" she answers, smiling —
woman's art

To let a man's own mouth, not hers,
decree

What shall be next move which decides
the game:

Success? She said so. Failure? His
the blame.

CXVI.

30 "Well!" this time forth affirmatively
comes

With smack of lip, and long-drawn
sigh through teeth

Close clenched o'er satisfaction, as the
gums

Were tickled by a sweetmeat teased be-
neath

Palate by lubricating tongue: "Well!"
crumbs

Of comfort these, undoubtedly! no
death

Likely from famine at Fame's feast! 'tis
clear

I may put claim in for my pittance, Dear!

CXVII.

"La Roque, Voltaire, my lovers! Then
disguise

Has served its turn, grows idle; let it
drop!

I shall to Paris, flaunt there in men's eyes
My proper manly garb and mount atop

The pedestal that waits me, take the prize
Awarded Hercules. He threw a sop

To Cerberus who let him pass, you know,
Then, following, licked his heels: exactly

so!

CXVIII.

"I like the prospect — their astonishment,
Confusion: wounded vanity, no doubt,
Mixed motives; how I see the brows
quick bent!

'What, sir, yourself, none other,
brought about

This change of estimation? Phœbus sent
His shafts as from Diana?' Critic pout

Turns courtier smile: 'Lo, him we took
for her!

Pleasant mistake! You bear no malice,
sir?"

CXIX.

"Eh, my Diana?" But Diana kept
Smilingly silent with fixed needle-sharp
Much-meaning eyes that seemed to inter-
cept

Paul's very thoughts ere they had time to
warp

From earnest into sport the words they
leapt

To life with — changed as when mal-
treated harp

Renders in tinkle what some player-prig
Means for a grave tune though it proves a
jig.

CXX.

"What, Paul, and are my pains thus
thrown away,

My lessons end in loss?" at length fall
slow

The pitying syllables, her lips allay
The satire of by keeping in full flow,

Above their coral reef, bright smiles at
play:

"Can it be, Paul thus fails to rightly
know

And altogether estimate applause
As just so many asinine hee-haws?

CXXI.

"I thought to show you": . . . "Show
me," Paul in-broke,

"My poetry is rubbish, and the world
That rings with my renown a sorry joke!
What fairer test of worth than that,
form furred,

I entered the arena? Yet you croak
Just as if Phœbé and not Phœbus
hurled
The dart and struck the Python! What,
he crawls
Humbly in dust before your feet, not
Paul's?

CXXII.

"Nay, 'tis no laughing matter though
absurd

If there's an end of honesty on earth!
La Roque sends letters, lying every word!
Voltaire makes verse, and of himself
makes mirth
To the remotest age! Rousseau's the
third

Who, driven to despair amid such
dearth

Of people that want praising, finds no
one

More fit to praise than Paul the simpleton!

CXXIII.

"Somebody says — if a man writes at all
It is to show the writer's kith and kin
He was unjustly thought a natural;

And truly, sister, I have yet to win
Your favourable word, it seems, for Paul
Whose poetry you count not worth a
pin

Though well enough esteemed by these
Voltaires,

Rousseaus and suchlike: let them quack,
who cares?"

CXXIV.

"— To Paris with you, Paul! Not one
word's waste

Further: my scrupulosity was vain!
Go triumph! Be my foolish fears effaced
From memory's record! Go, to come
again

With glory crowned, — by sister re-em-
braced,

Cured of that strange delusion of her
brain

Which led her to suspect that Paris gloats
On male limbs mostly when in petticoats!"

CXXV.

So laughed her last word, with the little
touch

Of malice proper to the outraged pride
Of any artist in a work too much
Shorn of its merits. "By all means be
tried

The opposite procedure! Cast your
crutch

Away, no longer crippled, nor divide

The credit of your march to the World's
Fair
With sister Cherry-cheeks who helped you
there!"

CXXVI.

Crippled, forsooth! what courser spright- 49
lier pranced

Paris-ward than did Paul? Nay,
dreams lent wings:

He flew, or seemed to fly, by dreams en-
tranced.

Dreams? wide-awake realities: no
things

Dreamed merely were the missives that
advanced

The claim of Malcrais to consort with
kings

Crowned by Apollo — not to say with
queens

Cinctured by Venus for Idalian scenes.

CXXVII.

Soon he arrives, forthwith is found before
The outer gate of glory. Bold tic-toc
Announces there's a giant at the door. 50

"Ay, sir, here dwells the Chevalier La
Roque."

"Lackey! Malcrais, — mind, no word
less nor more! —

Desires his presence. I've unearthed
the brock:

Now, to transfix him!" There stands
Paul erect,

Inched out his uttermost, for more effect.

CXXVIII.

A bustling entrance: "Idol of my flame!
Can it be that my heart attains at last

Its longing? that you stand, the very same
As in my visions? . . . Ha! hey, how?"

aghast
Stops short the rapture. "Oh, my boy's 60
to blame!

You merely are the messenger! Too
fast

My fancy rushed to a conclusion. Pooh!
Well, sir, the lady's substitute is — who?"

CXXIX.

Then Paul's smirk grows inordinate.
"Shake hands!

Friendship not love awaits you, master
mine,

Though nor Malcrais nor any mistress
stands

To meet your ardour! So, you don't
divine

Who wrote the verses wherewith ring the
land's

Whole length and breadth? Just he
whereof no line

Had ever leave to blot your Journal — eh?
Paul Desforges Maillard — otherwise Mal-
crais!”

CCXX.

And there the two stood, stare confronting
smirk,
Awhile uncertain which should yield the
pas.

In vain the Chevalier beat brain for quirk
To help in this conjuncture; at length
“Bah!

Boh! Since I’ve made myself a fool, why
shirk

The punishment of folly? Ha, ha, ha,
Let me return your handshake!” Comic
sock

10 For tragic buskin prompt thus changed
La Roque.

CCXXXI.

“I’m nobody — a wren-like journalist;
You’ve flown at higher game and
winged your bird,

The golden eagle! That’s the grand
acquist!

Voltaire’s sly Muse, the tiger-cat, has
purred

Prettily round your feet; but if she missed
Priority of stroking, soon were stirred

The dormant spit-fire. To Voltaire!
away,

Paul Desforges Maillard, otherwise Mal-
crais!”

CCXXXII.

Whereupon, arm in arm, and head in air,
20 The two begin their journey. Need I say,
La Roque had felt the talon of Voltaire,

Had a long-standing little debt to pay,
And pounced, you may depend, on such

a rare

Occasion for its due discharge? So,
gay

And grenadier-like, marching to assault,
They reach the enemy’s abode, there halt.

CCXXXIII.

“I’ll be announcer!” quoth La Roque:
“I know,

Better than you, perhaps, my Breton
bard,

How to procure an audience! He’s not
slow

30 To smell a rat, this scamp Voltaire!
Discard

The petticoats too soon, — you’ll never
show

Your *haut-de-chausses* and all they’ve
made or marred

In your true person. Here’s his servant.
Pray,

Will the great man see Demoiselle Mal-
crais?”

CCXXXIV.

Now, the great man was also, no whit less,
The man of self-respect, — more great
man he!

And bowed to social usage, dressed the
dress,

And decorated to the fit degree

His person; ’twas enough to bear the
stress

Of battle in the field, without, when free 40

From outside foes, inviting friends’ attack
By — sword in hand? No, — ill-made
coat on back!

CCXXXV.

And, since the announcement of his visitor
Surprised him at his toilet, — never
glass

Had such solicitation! “Black, now —
or

Brown be the killing wig to wear? Alas,
Where’s the rouge gone, this cheek were
better for

A tender touch of? Melted to a mass,
All my pomatum! There’s at all events
A devil — for he’s got among my scents!” 50

CCXXXVI.

So, “barbered ten times o’er,” as Antony
Paced to his Cleopatra, did at last

Voltaire proceed to the fair presence: high
In colour, proud in port, as if a blast

Of trumpet bade the world “Take note!
draws nigh

To Beauty, Power! Behold the Icono-
clast,

The Poet, the Philosopher, the Rod
Of iron for imposture! Ah my God!”

CCXXXVII.

For there stands smirking Paul, and —
what lights fierce

The situation as with sulphur flash — 60
There grinning stands La Roque! No

carte-and-tierce
Observes the grinning fencer, but, full
dash

From breast to shoulder-blade, the thrusts
transpiere

That armour against which so idly clash
The swords of priests and pedants! Vic-
tors there,

Two smirk and grin who have befooled —
Voltaire!

CCXXXVIII.

A moment’s horror; then quick turn-about
On high-heeled shoe, — flurry of ruffles,
flounce

Of wig-ties and of coat-tails, — and so out
Of door banged wrathfully behind, 70

goes — bounce —

Voltaire in tragic exit! vows, no doubt,
Vengeance upon the couple. Did he
trounce
Either, in point of fact? His anger's flash
Subsided if a culprit craved his cash.

CXXXIX.

As for La Roque, he having laughed his
laugh
To heart's content, — the joke defunct at
once,
Dead in the birth, you see, — its epitaph
Was sober earnest. "Well, sir, for the
nonce,
You've gained the laurel; never hope to
graff

10 A second spring of triumph there! En-
sconce
Yourself again at Croisic: let it be
Enough you mastered both Voltaire and
— me!

CXL.

"Don't linger here in Paris to parade
Your victory, and have the very boys
Point at you! 'There's the little mouse
which made
Believe those two big lions that its noise,
Nibbling away behind the hedge, conveyed
Intelligence that — portent which de-
stroys

20 All courage in the lion's heart, with horn
That's fable — there lay couched the uni-
corn!

CXLI.

"Beware us, now we've found who fooled
us! Quick

To cover! 'In proportion to men's
fright,
Expect their fright's revenge!' quoth
politic
Old Macchiavelli. As for me, — all's
right:

I'm but a journalist. But no pin's prick
The tooth leaves when Voltaire is roused
to bite!

So, keep your counsel, I advise! Adieu!
Good journey! Ha, ha, ha, Malcrais
was — you!"

CXLII.

"— Yes, I'm Malcrais, and somebody be-
side,

30 You snickering monkey!" thus winds
up the tale

Our hero, safe at home, to that black-eyed
Cherry-cheeked sister, as she soothes the
pale

Mortified poet. "Let their worst be tried,
I'm their match henceforth — very man
and male!

Don't talk to me of knocking-under! man
And male must end what petticoats began!

CXLIII.

"How woman-like it is to apprehend
The world will eat its words! why,
words transfixed

To stone, they stare at you in print, — at
end,

Each writer's style and title! Choose 40
betwixt

Fool and knave for his name, who should
intend

To perpetrate a baseness so unmixed
With prospect of advantage! What is writ
Is writ: they've praised me, there's an end
of it.

CXLIV.

"No, Dear, allow me! I shall print these
same

Pieces, with no omitted line, as Paul's.
Malcrais no longer, let me see folk blame
What they — praised simply? — placed
on pedestals,

Each piece a statue in the House of Fame!
Fast will they stand there, though their 50
presence galls

The envious crew: such show their teeth,
perhaps,

And snarl, but never bite! I know the
chaps!"

CXLV.

Oh Paul, oh piteously deluded! Pace
Thy sad sterility of Croisic flats,
Watch, from their southern edge, the foamy
race

Of high-tide as it heaves the drowning
mats

Of yellow-berried web-growth from their
place,

The rock-ridge, when, rolling as far as
Batz,

One broadside crashes on it, and the crags,
That needle under, stream with weedy rags! 60

CXLVI.

Or, if thou wilt, at inland Bergerac,
Rude heritage but recognised domain,
Do as two here are doing: make hearth
crack

With logs until thy chimney roar again
Jolly with fire-glow! Let its angle lack

No grace of Cherry-cheeks thy sister,
fain

To do a sister's office and laugh smooth
Thy corrugated brow — that scowls for-
sooth!

CXLVII.

Wherefore? Who does not know how
these La Roques,
Voltaires, can say and unsay, praise and 70
blame,
Prove black white, white black, play at
paradox

And, when they seem to lose it, win the game?
 Care not thou what this badger, and that fox,
 His fellow in rascality, call "fame!"
 Fiddlepin's end! Thou hadst it, — quack quack, quack!
 Have quietude from geese at Bergerac!

CXLVIII.

Quietude! For, be very sure of this!
 A twelvemonth hence, and men shall know or care
 As much for what to-day they clap or hiss
 As for the fashion of the wigs they wear,
 10 Then wonder at. There's fame which, bale or bliss, —
 Got by no gracious word of great Voltaire
 Or not-so-great La Roque, — is taken back
 By neither, any more than Bergerac!

CXLIX.

Too true! or rather, true as ought to be!
 No more of Paul the man, Malcrais the maid,
 Thenceforth for ever! One or two, I see,
 Stuck by their poet: who the longest stayed
 Was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and even he
 Seemingly saddened as perforce he paid
 20 A rhyming tribute "After death, survive —
 He hoped he should; and died while yet alive!"

CL.

No, he hoped nothing of the kind, or held
 His peace and died in silent good old age.
 Him it was, curiosity impelled
 To seek if there were extant still some page
 Of his great predecessor, rat who belled
 The cat once, and would never deign engage
 In after-combat with mere mice, — saved from
 More sonnetteering, — René Gentilhomme.

CLI.

30 Paul's story furnished forth that famous play
 Of Piron's "Métromanie": there you'll find
 He's Francaleu, while Demoiselle Malcrais
 Is Demoiselle No-end-of-names-behind!
 As for Voltaire, he's Damis. Good and gay
 The plot and dialogue, and all's designed
 To spite Voltaire: at "Something" such the laugh
 Of simply "Nothing!" (see his epitaph).

CLII.

But truth, truth, that's the gold! and all the good
 I find in fancy is, it serves to set
 Gold's inmost glint free, gold which comes 40
 up rude
 And rayless from the mine. All fume and fret
 Of artistry beyond this point pursued
 Brings out another sort of burnish: yet
 Always the ingot has its very own
 Value, a sparkle struck from truth alone.

CLIII.

Now, take this sparkle and the other spirt
 Of fitful flame, — twin births of our grey brand
 That's sinking fast to ashes! I assert,
 As sparkles want but fuel to expand
 Into a conflagration no mere squirt 50
 Will quench too quickly, so might Croisic strand,
 Had Fortune pleased posterity to chowse,
 Boast of her brace of beacons luminous.

CLIV.

Did earlier Agamemnons lack their bard?
 But later bards lacked Agamemnon too!
 How often frustrate they of fame's award
 Just because Fortune, as she listed, blew
 Some slight bark's sails to belying, mauled and marred
 And forced to put about the First-rate!
 True,
 Such tacks but for a time: still — small- 60
 craft ride
 At anchor, rot while Beddoes breasts the tide!

CLV.

Dear, shall I tell you? There's a simple test
 Would serve, when people take on them to weigh
 The worth of poets, "Who was better, best,
 This, that, the other bard?" (bards none gainsay
 As good, observe! no matter for the rest)
 "What quality preponderating may
 Turn the scale as it trembles?" End the strife
 By asking "Which one led a happy life?"

CLVI.

If one did, over his antagonist 70
 That yelled or shrieked or sobbed or wept or wailed
 Or simply had the dumps, — dispute who list, —
 I count him victor. Where his fellow failed,
 Mastered by his own means of might, — acquist

Of necessary sorrows, — he prevailed,
A strong since joyful man who stood distinct
Above slave-sorrows to his chariot linked.

CLVII.

Was not his lot to feel more? What meant
"feel"
Unless to suffer! Not, to see more?
Sight —
What helped it but to watch the drunken
reel
Of vice and folly round him, left and
right,
One dance of rogues and idiots! Not, to
deal
More with things lovely? What pro-
voked the spite
10 Of filth incarnate, like the poet's need
Of other nutriment than strife and greed!

CLVIII.

Who knows most, doubts most; entertain-
ing hope,
Means recognising fear, the keener
sense
Of all comprised within our actual scope
Recoils from aught beyond earth's dim
and dense.
Who, grown familiar with the sky, will
grope
Henceforward among groundlings?
That's offence
Just as indubitably: stars abound
O'erhead, but then — what flowers make
glad the ground!

CLIX.

20 So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force:
What then? since Swiftness gives the
charioteer
The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse
Whose neck God clothed with thunder,
not the steer
Sluggish and safe! Yoke Hatred, Crime,
Remorse,
Despair: but ever mid the whirling fear,
Let, through the tumult, break the poet's
face
Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the
race!

CLX.

Therefore I say . . . no, shall not say,
but think,
And save my breath for better purpose.
White
30 From grey our log has burned to: just one
blink
That quivers, loth to leave it, as a sprite
The outworn body. Ere your eyelids'
wink
Punish who sealed so deep into the night

Your mouth up, for two poets dead so
long, —
Here pleads a live pretender: right your
wrong!

I.

What a pretty tale you told me
Once upon a time
— Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)
Was it prose or was it rhyme,
Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
40 While your shoulder propped my head.

II.

Anyhow there's no forgetting
This much if no more,
That a poet (pray, no petting!)
Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
Went where suchlike used to go,
Singing for a prize, you know.

III.

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
Sing but play the lyre;
Playing was important clearly
50 Quite as singing: I desire,
Sir, you keep the fact in mind
For a purpose that's behind.

IV.

There stood he, while deep attention
Held the judges round,
— Judges able, I should mention,
To detect the slightest sound
Sung or played amiss: such ears
Had old judges, it appears!

V.

None the less he sang out boldly, 60
Played in time and tune,
Till the judges, weighing coldly
Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
Sure to smile "In vain one tries
Picking faults out: take the prize!"

VI.

When, a mischief! Were they seven
Strings the lyre possessed?
Oh, and afterwards eleven,
Thank you! Well, sir, — who had
guessed
Such ill luck in store? — it happened 70
One of those same seven strings snapped.

VII.

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
(What "cicada"? Pooh!)
— Some mad thing that left its thicket
For mere love of music — flew
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

VIII.

So that when (ah joy!) our singer
For his triumphant string
Frets with disconcerted finger,
What does cricket else but fling
Flery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat?

IX.

Ay and, ever to the ending,
Cricket jumps at need,
Executes the hand's intending.
10 Promptly, perfectly, — indeed
Saves the singer from defeat
With her shining bow and sweet.

X.

Till, at ending, all the judges
Cry with one assent
"Take the prize — a prize who grudgees
Such a voice and instrument?
Why, we took your lyre for harp,
So it shelled us forth P sharp!"

XI.

Did the conqueror spare the creature,
20 Once its service done?
That's no such uncommon feature
In the case when Musé's son
Finds his Lotté's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

XII.

No! This other, on returning
Homeward, prone in mud,
Satisfied his bosom's yearning:
(Sir, I hope you understand?)
Said "Some reward there must be
30 Of this cricket's help to me!"

XIII.

So, he made himself a statue:
Marble stood life-size;

On the lyre, he pointed at you
Punctured his partner in the prize;
Never more about you found
Her, he thronged from him, she crowned.

XIV.

That's the tale: its application?
Somebody I know
Hopes one day for reputation
Though his poetry that's — Oh,
40 All so learned and so wise
And deserving of a prize!

XV.

If he gains one, will some ticket,
When his statue's built,
Till the gazer "Twas a cricket
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lit
Sweet and low, whose strength usurped
Softness' place?" the scale, she dumped!

XVI.

"For as victory was highest,
While I sang and played, —
50 With my lyre at lowest, highest,
Right off, — the string that made
"Love" sound soft was snapt in twain,
Never to be heard again. —

XVII.

"Had not a knee or knee-battered,
Punctured upon the place
Vibrated it and duly uttered
"Love, love, love, wherever the bass
Asked the triller to alone
60 For its somewhat sombre drone!"

XVIII.

But you don't know music! Wherefore
Keep on casting peans
To a — poet? All I care for
Is — to tell him that a poet's
"Love" comes soon to what gruff
Or, as his singing (I note, enough)

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

FIRST SERIES.

1879.

MARTIN RELPH.

*My grandfather says he remembers he saw,
when a youngster long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man,
with a beard as white as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a
monument of woe,
And, striking his bare head the while,
sob out the reason — so!*

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never
forgive myself:
But — God forgive me, that I pray, un-
happy Martin Relph,
As coward, coward I call him — him, yes,
him! Away from me!
Get you behind the man I am now, you
man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set
me a-stare, all eyes, no tongue?
People have urged "You visit a scare too
hard on a lad so young!
You were taken aback, poor boy," they
urge, "no time to regain your wits:
Besides it had maybe cost you life." Ay,
there is the cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward, — thus! No fear!
A cuff on the brow does good:
The feel of it hinders a worm inside which
bores at the brain for food.
See now, there certainly seems excuse: for
a moment, I trust, dear friends,
The fault was but folly, no fault of mine,
or if mine, I have made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the
hill-top, here stand I,
Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and
publish the reason why,
When there gathers a crowd to mock the
fool. No fool, friends, since the
bite
Of a worm inside is worse to bear: pray
God I have baulked him quite!

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It
came of the way they cooped
Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close
huddling because tight-hooped

By the red-coats round us villagers all:
they meant we should see the sight
And take the example, — see, not speak,
for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried
he: "This woman about to die
Gives by her fate fair warning to such
acquaintance as play the spy.
Henceforth who meddle with matters of
state above them perhaps will learn
That peasants should stick to their plough-
tail, leave to the King the King's con-
cern.

"Here's a quarrel that sets the land on
fire, between King George and his
foes:

What call has a man of your kind — much ³⁶
less, a woman — to interpose?
Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like
you, not foes — so much the worse!
The many and loyal should keep them-
selves unmixed with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it
you plainly a month ago,
And where was the good? The rebels have
learned just all that they need to know.
Not a month since in we quietly marched:
a week, and they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and file to
a note of our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were
doing and like to do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture
who wrote it, too.
Some of you men look black enough, but
the milk-white face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a ⁴⁰
woman who writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your
mouth!' — good natural stuff, she
pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course:
with talk about cocks and hens,
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree,
and our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining
afresh round casement in famous
leaf.'

"But all for a blind! She soon glides frank into 'Horrid the place is grown With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our own: And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be to seek For the second Company sure to come ('tis whispered) on Monday week.'

"And so to the end of the chapter! There! The murder, you see, was out: Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought about! Safe in the trap would they now lie snug, had treachery made no sign: But treachery meets a just reward, no matter if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was proved — sent news which fell so pat: 10 And the murder was out — this letter of love, the sender of this sent that! 'Tis an ugly job, though, all the same — a hateful, to have to deal With a case of the kind, when a woman's in fault: we soldiers need nerves of steel!

"So, I gave her a chance, dispatched post-haste a message to Vincent Parkes Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was, since one of the King's own clerks, Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the town close by where the rebels camp: A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray our sort — the scamp!

"If her writing is simple and honest and only the lover-like stuff it looks, And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor down in the rebels' books, Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove you are each of you clear of crime, 20 Or martial law must take its course: this day next week's the time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not he! Clean gone, our clerk, in a trice! He has left his sweetheart here in the lurch: no need of a warning twice! His own neck free, but his partner's fast in the noose still, here she stands To pay for her fault. 'Tis an ugly job: but soldiers obey commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech! Should any acquaintance share The folly that led to the fault that is now to be punished, let fools beware! Look black, if you please, but keep hands white: and, above all else, keep wives — Or sweethearts or what they may be — from ink! Not a word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white to the Captain's face — the brute With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose and the bloodshot eyes to suit! He was muddled with wine, they say: more like, he was out of his wits with fear; He had but a handful of men, that's true, — a riot might cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page, with pinioned arms and face Bandaged about, on the turf marked out for the party's firing-place. I hope she was wholly with God: I hope 'twas His angel stretched a hand To steady her so, like the shape of stone you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the bandage to vex her eyes, No face within which she missed without, no questions and no replies — "Why did you leave me to die?" — "Because . . ." Oh, fiends, too soon you grin At merely a moment of hell, like that — 4 such heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up went the guns in a line. Those heaped on the hill were blind as dumb, — for, of all eyes, only mine Looked over the heads of the foremost rank. Some fell on their knees in prayer, Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes, with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last, Had sidled behind the group: I am highest of all on the hill-top, there stand fixed while the others stoop! From head to foot in a serpent's twine am I tightened: I touch ground? No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst — aught else but see, see, only see? And see I do — for there comes in sight — 5 a man, it sure must be! — Who staggeringly, stumbingly rises, falls, rises, at random flings his weight On and on, anyhow onward — a man that's mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white high-flourished above his head? Why does not he call, cry, — curse the fool! — why throw up his arms instead? O take this fist in your own face, fool! Why does not yourself shout "Stay!

Here's a paper comes rustling, might and main, with something he's mad to say?"

And a minute, only a moment, to have hell-fire boil up in your brain,

And one you can judge things right, choose heaven, — time's over, repentance vain!

They loved a valley, a smoke and the clearing of smoke: I see no more Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms, nor the something white he bore.

But street-bed on the field, some half mile off, is an object. Surely dumb!

Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody heard, not one of us saw him come! Has he fainted through fright? One may well believe! What is it he holds so fast?

Turn him over, examine the face! Hey-day! What, Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the self-same shot: one bullet has ended both,

Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at our plighted troth

"Till death us do part?" "Till death us do join past parting — that sounds like Betrotal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound, and your soul reached hers!

There is clamped in your hand the thing, signed, sealed, the paper which plain avers

She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's Arms broad engraved!

No one can hear, but if anyone high on the hill can see, she's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break — plain it grew

How the week's delay had been brought about: each guess at the end proved true.

It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of time! and then

Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end to the stupid forms

The licence and leave: I make no doubt — what wonder if passion warms

The pulse in a man if you play with his heart? — he was something hasty in speech;

Anyhow, none would quicken the work he had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp, — what followed but fresh delays?

For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a roundabout of ways!

And 'twas "Halt there!" at every turn of the road, since he had to cross the thick

Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his "Quick, for God's sake, quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first knave smirked "You brag

Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's friend here your nag!"

Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they plundered him still,

With their "Wait you must, — no help: if aught can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was — I forget the name — whose Mayor must have the bench

Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for "Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!

It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man can certainly know

Is — rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a horror — so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay bite me! The worm begins

At his work once more. Had cowardice proved — that only — my sin of sins!

Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . 40 suppose . . . But mad I am, needs must be!

Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched self, and dreamed

In the heart of me "She were better dead than happy and his!" — while gleamed

A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest embrace,

He the saviour and she the saved, — bliss born of the very murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and coward, but nothing worse!

Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'Twas ever the coward's curse

That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow for substance still,

— A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes, — loved Vincent, if you will!

And her — why, I said "Good morrow" 50 to her, "Good even," and nothing more:

The neighbourly way! She was just to me
as fifty had been before.
So, coward it is and coward shall be!
There's a friend, now! Thanks!
A drink
Of water I wanted: and now I can walk,
get home by myself, I think.

PHEIDIPPIDES.

[Pheidippides, when the Persians went
up into Attica, ran all the way from Athens
to Sparta to demand aid, and ran back
again in time to be at Marathon; and then,
the battle over, ran to Athens to announce
the victory — falling dead, having done so.]

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river
and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes,
honour to all!
Then I name thee, claim thee for our
patron, co-equal in praise
— Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her
of the ægis and spear!¹
Also, ye of the bow and the buskin,²
praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and for ever, — O latest
to whom I upraise
10 Hand and heart and voice! For Athens,
leave pasture and flock!
Present to help, potent to save, Pan —
patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix,³
see, I return!
See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no
spectre that speaks!
Crowned with the myrtle, did you com-
mand me, Athens and you,
“Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach
Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is
She?” Your command I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field
which a fire runs through,
Was the space between city and city: two
days, two nights did I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits
and up peaks.
20 Into their midst I broke: breath served but
for “Persia has come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves’ tribute,
water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria — but
Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die — the flower of
Hellas utterly die,

Die, with the wide world spitting at
Sparta, the stupid, the stander-by?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand
do you stretch o’er destruction’s
brink?
How, — when? No care for my limbs! —
there’s lightning in all and some —
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once
lips give it birth!”

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did
Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of
envy, mistrust,
Malice, — each eye of her gave me its
glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to
cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as
fire frets, an inch from dry wood:
“Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and
still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athené, are Spar-
tans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Arte-
mis, clang them ‘Ye must’!”

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo,
their answer at last!
“Has Persia come, — does Athens ask
aid, — may Sparta befriend?
Nowise precipitate judgment — too
weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags
through respect to the Gods!
Ponder that precept of old, ‘No warfare, 4
whatever the odds
In your favour, so long as the moon, half-
orbed, is unable to take
Full-circle her state in the sky!’ Already
she rounds to it fast:
Athens must wait, patient as we — who
judgment suspend.”

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy
name, I had mouldered to ash!
That sent a blaze through my blood; off,
off and away was I back,
— Not one word to waste, one look to lose
on the false and the vile!
Yet “O Gods of my land!” I cried, as
each hillock and plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named,
rushing past them again,
“Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of
honours we paid you erewhile?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome 5
libation! Too rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely ser-
vice so slack!

“Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you
cease to enwreath

¹ Athené.

² Apollo and Artemis.

³ The grasshopper, the national emblem.

Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,
 You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave!
 Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste tract!
 Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked
 My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave
 No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can breathe,
 Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
 Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar
 Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
 Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across:
 "Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse?"
 Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey —
 Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge
 Better!" — when — ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestic Pan!
 Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof:
 All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly — the curl
 Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
 As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
 "Halt, Pheidippides!" — halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
 "Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious began:
 "How is it, — Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?"

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!
 Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?
 Ay, and still, and for ever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!
 Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith
 In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-God saith:
 When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast in the sea,
 Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and least,
 Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and the bold!'

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the pledge!'"
 (Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
 — Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — whatever it bode)
 "While, as for thee . . ." But enough! He was gone. If I ran hitherto —
 Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
 Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
 Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's edge!
 Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best 40 runner of Greece,
 Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised thyself?
 Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands of her son!"
 Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length
 His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of his strength
 Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast done'
 Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee release
 From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!"

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind!
 Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may grow, —
 Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to 50 dust, and, under the deep,
 Whelm her away for ever; and then, — no Athens to save, —
 Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave, —
 Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep
 Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful yet kind,
 Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him — so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!
 Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!
 'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!"
 He flung down his shield,

* A Greek idiom for a dangerous position.

Ran like fire once more: and the space
'twixt the Fennel-field!
And Athens was stubble again, a field
which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!"
Like wine through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he
died — the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend,
the word of salute
Is still "Rejoice!" — his word which
brought rejoicing indeed.
So is Pheidippides happy for ever, — the
noble strong man
Who could race like a God, bear the face
of a God, whom a God loved so well;
He saw the land saved he had helped to
save, and was suffered to tell
10 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, glo-
riously as he began,
So to end gloriously — once to shout,
thereafter be mute:
"Athens is saved!" — Pheidippides dies
in the shout for his meed.

HALBERT AND HOB.

HERE is a thing that happened. Like
wild beasts whelped, for den,
In a wild part of North England, there
lived once two wild men
Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel
nor hut,
Time out of mind their birthright: father
and son, these — but —
Such a son, such a father! Most wildness
by degrees
Softens away: yet, last of their line, the
wildest and worst were these.
Criminals, then? Why, no: they did not
murder and rob;
20 But, give them a word, they returned a
blow — old Halbert as young Hob:
Harsh and fierce of word, rough and
savage of deed,
Hated or feared the more — who knows?
— the genuine wild-beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse
folk of the country-side;
But how fared each with other? E'en
beasts couch, hide by hide,
In a growling, grudging agreement: so,
father and son aye curled
The closelier up in their den because the
last of their kind in the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One
Christmas night of snow,

¹ Marathon.

Came father and son to words — such
words! more cruel because the blow
To crown each word was wanting, while
taunt matched gibe, and curse
Competed with oath in wager, like pas-
time in hell, — nay, worse:
For pastime turned to earnest, as up there
sprang at last
The son at the throat of the father, seized
him and held him fast.

"Out of this house you go!" — (there
followed a hideous oath) —
"This oven where now we bake, too hot
to hold us both!
If there's snow outside, there's coolness:
out with you, bide a spell
In the drift and save the sexton the charge
of a parish shell!"

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as
stump of oak
Untouched at the core by a thousand
years: more less had its seventy
broke
One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass
from neck to shoulder-blade
Of the mountainous man, whereon his 4
child's rash hand like a feather
weighed.

Nevertheless at once did the mammoth
shut his eyes,
Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides,
stand stiffened — arms and thighs
All of a piece — struck mute, much as a
sentry stands,
Patient to take the enemy's fire: his cap-
tain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at
such sheer scorn
Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus
acting the babe new-born:
And "Neither will this turn serve!"
yelled he. "Out with you! Trundle,
log!
If you cannot tramp and trudge like a
man, try all-fours like a dog!"

Still the old man stood mute. So, log-
wise, — down to floor
Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on 50
from hearth to door, —
Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along,
until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a
yard from the house-door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes — each spark
of their rage extinct, —
Temples, late black, dead-blanch'd, —
right-hand with left-hand linked, —

He faced his son submissive; when slow
the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's
rash hand on his neck lay all the same.

"Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas
long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did
I drag — so —
My father down thus far: but, softening
here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you
wait for an outer word.

"For your own sake, not mine, soften you
too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave
the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I
nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and,
Hob, do you the same!"

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the
father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room
again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to
either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christ-
mas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the
self-same place,
With an outburst blackening still the old
bad fighting-face:
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any
lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's
staff he borrowed — tottered and
leaned.
But his lips were loose, not locked, — kept
muttering, mumbling. "There!
At his cursing and swearing!" the young-
sters cried: but the elders thought
"In prayer."
A boy threw stones: he picked them up
and stored them in his vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he
died, perhaps found rest.
"Is there a reason in nature for these hard
hearts?" O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn
them soft, seems clear!

IVÀN IVÀNOVITCH.

"THEY tell me, your carpenters," quoth I
to my friend the Russ,
"Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-
box serves with us.

Arm but each man with his axe, 'tis a
hammer and saw and plane
And chisel, and — what know I else?
We should imitate in vain
The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of
just the adze,
He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in, — no ³⁰
need of our nails and brads, —
The manageable pine: 'tis said he could
shave himself
With the axe, — so all adroit, now a giant
and now an elf,
Does he work and play at once!"
Quoth my friend the Russ to me,
"Ay, that and more beside on occasion!
It scarce may be
You never heard tell a tale told children,
time out of mind,
By father and mother and nurse, for a
moral that's behind,
Which children quickly seize. If the in-
cident happened at all,
We place it in Peter's time when hearts
were great not small,
Germanised, Frenchified. I wager 'tis old
to you
As the story of Adam and Eve, and pos- ⁴⁰
sibly quite as true."

In the deep of our land, 'tis said, a village
from out the woods
Emerged on the great main-road 'twixt
two great solitudes.
Through forestry right and left, black
verst¹ and verst of pine,
From village to village runs the road's
long wide bare line.
Clearance and clearance break the else-
unconquered growth
Of pine and all that breeds and broods
there, leaving loth
Man's inch of masterdom, — spot of life,
spirt of fire, —
To star the dark and dread, lest right and
rule expire
Throughout the monstrous wild, a-
hungered to resume
Its ancient sway, suck back the world into ⁵⁰
its womb:
Defrauded by man's craft which clove
from North to South
This highway broad and straight e'en
from the Neva's mouth
To Moscow's gates of gold. So, spot of
life and spirt
Of fire aforesaid, burn, each village death-
begirt
By wall and wall of pine — unprobed un-
dreamed abyss.

Early one winter morn, in such a village as
this,

¹ About two-thirds of a mile.

Snow-whitened everywhere except the middle road
 Ice-roughed by track of sledge, there worked by his abode
 Ivàn Ivànovitch, the carpenter, employed On a huge shipmast trunk; his axe now trimmed and toyed
 With branch and twig, and now some chop athwart the bole
 Changed bole to billets, bared at once the sap and soul.
 About him, watched the work his neighbours sheepskin-clad;
 Each bearded mouth puffed steam, each grey eye twinkled glad
 To see the sturdy arm which, never stopping play,
 10 Proved strong man's blood still boils, freeze winter as he may.
 Sudden, a burst of bells. Out of the road, on edge
 Of the hamlet — horse's hoofs galloping.
 "How, a sledge?"
 What's here?" cried all as — in, up to the open space,
 Workyard and market-ground, folk's common meeting-place, —
 Stumbled on, till he fell, in one last bound for life,
 A horse: and, at his heels, a sledge held — "Dmitri's wife!
 Back without Dmitri too! and children — where are they?
 Only a frozen corpse!"

They drew it forth: then — "Nay, Not dead, though like to die! Gone hence a month ago:
 20 Home again, this rough jaunt — alone through night and snow —
 What can the cause be? Hark — Droug, old horse, how he groans:
 His day's done! Chafe away, keep chafing, for she moans:
 She's coming to! Give here: see, motherkin, your friends!
 Cheer up, all safe at home! Warm inside makes amends
 For outside cold, — sup quick! Don't look as we were bears!
 What is it startles you? What strange adventure stares
 Up at us in your face? You know friends — which is which?
 I'm Vassili, he's Sergei, Ivàn Ivànovitch . . ."

At the word, the woman's eyes, slow-wandering till they neared
 30 The blue eyes o'er the bush of honey-coloured beard,
 Took in full light and sense and — torn to rags, some dream

Which hid the naked truth — O loud and long the scream
 She gave, as if all power of voice within her throat
 Poured itself wild away to waste in one dread note!
 Then followed gasps and sobs, and then the steady flow
 Of kindly tears: the brain was saved, a man might know.
 Down fell her face upon the good friend's propping knee;
 His broad hands smoothed her head, as fain to brush it free
 From fancies, swarms that stung like bees unhived. He soothed —
 "Loukèria, Louscha!" — still he, fondling, smoothed and smoothed.
 At last her lips formed speech.

"Ivàn, dear — you indeed! You, just the same dear you! While I . . . O intercede,
 Sweet Mother, with thy Son Almighty — let his might
 Bring yesterday once more, undo all done last night!
 But this time yesterday, Ivàn, I sat like you,
 A child on either knee, and, dearer than the two,
 A babe inside my arms, close to my heart — that's lost
 In morsels o'er the snow! Father, Son, Holy Ghost,
 Cannot you bring again my blessed yesterday?"

When no more tears would flow, she told 50 her tale: this way.

"Maybe, a month ago, — was it not? — news came here,
 They wanted, deeper down, good workmen fit to rear
 A church and roof it in. 'We'll go,' my husband said:
 'None understands like me to melt and mould their lead.'
 So, friends here helped us off — Ivàn, dear, you the first!
 How gay we jingled forth, all five — (my heart will burst) —
 While Dmitri shook the reins, urged Droug upon his track!

"Well, soon the month ran out, we just were coming back,
 When yesterday — behold, the village was on fire!
 Fire ran from house to house. What help, 60 as, nigh and nigher,
 The flames came furious? 'Haste,' cried Dmitri, 'men must do

The little good man may: to sledge and in with you,
 You and our three! We check the fire by laying flat
 Each building in its path, — I needs must stay for that, —
 But you . . . no time for talk! Wrap round you every rug,
 Cover the couple close, — you'll have the babe to hug.
 No care to guide old Droug, he knows his way, by guess,
 Once start him on the road: but chirrup, none the less!
 The snow lies glib as glass and hard as steel, and soon
 You'll have rise, fine and full, a marvel of a moon.
 10 Hold straight up, all the same, this lighted twist of pitch!
 Once home and with our friend Ivàn Ivànovitch,
 All's safe: I have my pay in pouch, all's right with me,
 So I but find as safe you and our precious three!
 'Off, Droug!' — because the flames had reached us, and the men
 Shouted 'But lend a hand, Dmìtri — as good as ten!'
 "So, in we bundled — I, and these God gave me once;
 Old Droug, that's stiff at first, seemed youthful for the nonce:
 He understood the case, galloping straight ahead.
 Out came the moon: my twist soon dwindled, feebly red
 20 In that unnatural day — yes, daylight, bred between
 Moon-light and snow-light, lamped those grotto-depths which screen
 Such devils from God's eye. Ah, pines, how straight you grow
 Nor bend one pitying branch, true breed of brutal snow!
 Some undergrowth had served to keep the devils blind
 While we escaped outside their border!
 "Was that — wind?
 Anyhow, Droug starts, stops, back go his ears, he snuffs,
 Snorts, — never such a snort! then plunges, knows the sough's
 Only the wind: yet, no — our breath goes up too straight!
 Still the low sound, — less low, loud, louder, at a rate
 30 There's no mistaking more! Shall I lean out — look — learn
 The truth whatever it be? Pad, pad!
 At last. I turn —

"'Tis the regular pad of the wolves in pursuit of the life in the sledge!
 An army they are: close-packed they press like the thrust of a wedge:
 They increase as they hunt: for I see, through the pine-trunks ranged each side,
 Slip forth new fiend and fiend, make wider and still more wide
 The four-footed steady advance. The foremost — none may pass:
 They are elders and lead the line, eye and eye — green-glowing brass!
 But a long way distant still. Droug, save us! He does his best:
 Yet they gain on us, gain, till they reach, — one reaches . . . How utter the rest?
 O that Satan-faced first of the band! 40 How he lolls out the length of his tongue,
 How he laughs and lets gleam his white teeth! He is on me, his paws pry among
 The wraps and the rugs! O my pair, my twin-pigeons, lie still and seem dead!
 Stepàn, he shall never have you for a meal, — here's your mother instead!
 No, he will not be counselled — must cry, poor Stìdpka, so foolish! though first
 Of my boy-brood, he was not the best: nay, neighbours have called him the worst:
 He was puny, an undersized slip, — a darling to me, all the same!
 But little there was to be praised in the boy, and a plenty to blame.
 I loved him with heart and soul, yes — but, deal him a blow for a fault,
 He would sulk for whole days. 'Foolish boy! lie still or the villain will vault, 50 Will snatch you from over my head!' No use! he cries, screams, — who can hold
 Fast a boy in a frenzy of fear! It follows — as I foretold!
 The Satan-face snatched and snapped: I tugged, I tore — and then
 His brother too needs must shriek! If one must go, 'tis men
 The Tsar needs, so we hear, not ailing boys! Perhaps
 My hands relaxed their grasp, got tangled in the wraps:
 God, he was gone! I looked: there tumbled the cursed crew,
 Each fighting for a share: too busy to pursue!
 That's so far gain at least: Droug, gallop another verst
 Or two, or three — God sends we beat them, arrive the first!
 A mother who boasts two boys was ever 60 accounted rich:

Some have not a boy: some have, but
lose him, — God knows which
Is worse: how pitiful to see your weakling
pine
And pale and pass away! Strong brats,
this pair of mine!

"O misery! for while I settle to what near
seems

Content, I am 'ware again of the tramp,
and again there gleams —

Point and point — the line, eyes, levelled
green brassy fire!

So soon is resumed your chase? Will
nothing appease, nought tire

The furies? And yet I think — I am cer-
tain the race is slack,

And the numbers are nothing like. Not
a quarter of the pack!

10 Feasters and those full-fed are staying be-
hind . . . Ah why?

We'll sorrow for that too soon! Now, —
gallop, reach home, and die,

Nor ever again leave house, to trust our
life in the trap

For life — we call a sledge! Teriðscha,
in my lap!

Yes, I'll lie down upon you, tight-tie you
with the strings

Here — of my heart! No fear, this time,
your mother flings . . .

Flings? I flung? Never! but think!
a woman, after all

Contending with a wolf! Save you I must
and shall,

Terenti!

"How now? What, you still
head the race,

Your eyes and tongue and teeth crave fresh
food, Satan-face?

20 There and there! Plain I struck green
fire out! Flash again?

All a poor fist can do to damage eyes
proves vain!

My fist — why not crunch that? He is
wanton for . . . O God,

Why give this wolf his taste? Common
wolves scrape and prod

The earth till out they scratch some corpse
— mere putrid flesh!

Why must this glutton leave the faded,
choose the fresh?

Terenti! — God, feel! — his neck keeps
fast thy bag

Of holy things, saints' bones, this Satan-
face will drag

Forth, and devour along with him, our
Pope declared

The relics were to save from danger!

"Spurned, not spared.

30 'Twas through my arms, crossed arms,
he — nuzzling now with snout,

Now ripping, tooth and claw — plucked,
pulled Terenti out,

A prize indeed! I saw — how could I else
but see? —

My precious one — I bit to hold back —
pulled from me!

Up came the others, fell to dancing —
did the imps! —

Skipped as they scampered round.
There's one is grey, and limps:

Who knows but old bad Märpha, — she
always owed me spite

And envied me my births, — skulks out of
doors at night

And turns into a wolf, and joins the sister-
hood,

And laps the youthful life, then slinks
from out the wood,

Squats down at door by dawn, spins there 40
demure as erst

— No strength, old crone, — not she! —
to crawl forth half a verst!

"Well, I escaped with one: 'twixt one and
none there lies

The space 'twixt heaven and hell. And
see, a rose-light dyes

The endmost snow: 'tis dawn, 'tis day,
'tis safe at home!

We have outwitted you! Ay, monsters,
snarl and foam,

Fight each the other fiend, disputing for
a share,

Forgetful, in your greed, our finest off we
bear,

Tough Droug and I, — my babe, my boy
that shall be man,

My man that shall be more, do all a hunter
can

To trace and follow and find and catch 50
and crucify

Wolves, wolfkins, all your crew! A thou-
sand deaths shall die

The whimperingest cub that ever squeezed
the teat!

'Take that!' we'll stab you with, — 'the
tenderness we met

When, wretches, you danced round —
not this, thank God — not this!

Hellhounds, we baulk you!

"But — Ah, God above! — Bliss, bliss —
Not the band, no! And yet — yes, for

Droug knows him! One —

This only of them all has said 'She saves
a son!'

His fellows disbelieve such luck: but he
believes,

He lets them pick the bones, laugh at him 60
in their sleeves:

He's off and after us, — one speck, one
spot, one ball

Grows bigger, bound on bound, — one
wolf as good as all!

Oh but I know the trick! Have at the
snaky tongue!
That's the right way with wolves! Go,
tell your mates I wrung
The panting morsel out, left you to howl
your worst!
Now for it — now! Ah me! I know
him — thrice-accurst
Satan-face, — him to the end my foe!

“All fight's in vain:

This time the green brass points pierce to
my very brain.

I fall — fall as I ought — quite on the
babe I guard:

I overspread with flesh the whole of him.
Too hard

To die this way, torn piecemeal? Move
hence? Not I — one inch!

Gnaw through me, through and through:
flat thus I lie nor flinch!

O God, the feel of the fang furrowing my
shoulder! — see!

It grinds — it grates the bone. O Kìrill
under me.

Could I do more? Beside he knew wolf's
way to win:

I clung, closed round like wax: yet in he
wedged and in,

Past my neck, past my breasts, my heart,
until . . . how feels

The onion-bulb your knife parts, pushing
through its peels,

Till out you scoop its clove wherein lie
stalk and leaf

And bloom and seed unborn?

“That slew me: yes, in brief,
I died then, dead I lay doubtlessly till
Droug stopped

Here, I suppose. I come to life, I find me
propped

Thus — how or when or why, — I know
not. Tell me, friends,

All was a dream: laugh quick and say the
nightmare ends!

Soon I shall find my house: 'tis over there:
in proof,

Save for that chimney heaped with snow,
you'd see the roof

Which holds my three — my two — my
one — not one?

“Life's mixed

With misery, yet we live — must live.
The Satan fixed

His face on mine so fast, I took its print as
pitch

Takes what it cools beneath. Ivàn
Ivànovitch,

'Tis you unhardened me, you thaw, disperse
the thing!

Only keep looking kind, the horror will
not cling.

Your face smooths fast away each print of
Satan. Tears

— What good they do! Life's sweet, and
all its after-years,

Ivàn Ivànovitch, I owe you! Yours am
I!

May God reward you, dear!”

Down she sank. Solemnly

Ivàn rose, raised his axe, — for fitly, as
she knelt,

Her head lay: well-apart, each side, her
arms hung, — dealt

Lightning-swift thunder-strong one blow
— no need of more!

Headless she knelt on still: that pine was
sound at core

(Neighbours were used to say) — cast-
iron-kernelled — which

Taxed for a second stroke Ivàn Ivànovitch.

The man was scant of words as strokes.

“It had to be:

I could no other: God it was bade ‘Act
for me!’”

Then stooping, peering round — what is
it now he lacks?

A proper strip of bark wherewith to wipe
his axe.

Which done, he turns, goes in, closes the
door behind.

The others mute remain, watching the
blood-snake wind

Into a hiding-place among the splinter-
heaps.

At length, still mute, all move: one lifts, —
from where it steeps

Redder each ruddy rag of pine, — the
head: two more

Take up the dripping body: then, mute 50
still as before,

Move in a sort of march, march on till
marching ends

Opposite to the church; where halting, —
who suspends,

By its long hair, the thing, deposits in its
place

The piteous head: once more the body
shows no trace

Of harm done: there lies whole the
Loùscha, maid and wife

And mother, loved until this latest of her
life.

Then all sit on the bank of snow which
bounds a space

Kept free before the porch for judgment:
just the place!

Presently all the souls, man, woman, child,
which make

The village up, are found assembling for 60
the sake

- Of what is to be done. The very Jews are there:
 A Gipsy-troop, though bound with horses for the Fair,
 Squats with the rest. Each heart with its conception seethes
 And simmers, but no tongue speaks: one may say, — none breathes.
- Anon from out the church totters the Pope — the priest —
 Hardly alive, so old, a hundred years at least.
 With him, the Commune's head, a hoary senior too,
 Stàrosta, that's his style, — like Equity Judge with you, —
 Natural Jurisconsult: then, fenced about with furs,
 10 Pomeschik, — Lord of the Land, who wilds — and none demurs —
 A power of life and death. They stoop, survey the corpse.
- Then, straightened on his staff, the Stàrosta — the thorpe's
 Sagaciousest old man — hears what you just have heard,
 From Droug's first inrush, all, up to Ivàn's last word
 "God bade me act for him: I dared not disobey!"
- Silence — the Pomeschik broke with "A wild wrong way
 Of righting wrong — if wrong there were, such wroth to rouse!
 Why was not law observed? What article allows
 Whoso may please to play the judge, and, judgment dealt,
 20 Play executioner, as promptly as we pelt
 To death, without appeal, the vermin whose sole fault
 Has been — it dared to leave the darkness of its vault,
 Intrude upon our day! Too sudden and too rash!
 What was this woman's crime? Suppose the church should crash
 Down where I stand, your lord: bound are my serfs to dare
 Their utmost that I 'scape: yet, if the crashing scare
 My children, — as you are, — if sons fly, one and all,
 Leave father to his fate, — poor cowards though I call
 The runaway, I pause before I claim their life
 30 Because they prized it more than mine. I would each wife
 Died for her husband's sake, each son to save his sire:
- 'Tis glory, I applaud — scarce duty, I require.
 Ivàn Ivànovitch has done a deed that's named
 Murder by law and me: who doubts, may speak unblamed!"
- All turned to the old Pope. "Ay, children, I am old —
 How old, myself have got to know no longer. Rolled
 Quite round, my orb of life, from infancy to age,
 Seems passing back again to youth. A certain stage
 At least I reach, or dream I reach, where I discern
 Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn
 When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
 With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.
 'Your young men shall see visions:' and in my youth I saw
 And paid obedience to man's visionary law:
 'Your old men shall dream dreams:' and, in my age, a hand
 Conducts me through the cloud round law to where I stand
 Firm on its base, — know cause, who, before, knew effect.
- "The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
 So great a gift as this — God's own — of human life.
 'Shall the dead praise thee?' No! 'The whole live world is rife,
 God, with thy glory,' rather! Life then, God's best of gifts,
 For what shall man exchange? For life — when so he shifts
 The weight and turns the scale, lets life for life restore
 God's balance, sacrifice the less to gain the more,
 Substitute — for low life, another's or his own —
 Life large and liker God's who gave it: thus alone
 May life extinguish life that life may trulier be!
 How low this law descends on earth, is not for me
 To trace: complexed becomes the simple, intricate
 The plain, when I pursue law's winding. 60
 'Tis the straight
 Outflow of law I know and name: to law, the fount
 Fresh from God's footstool, friends, follow while I remount.

"A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
 So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat
 The miracle of life, — herself was born so just
 A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
 Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
 Crowned by this crowning pride, — how say you, should she spurn
 Regality — decrowned, unchilded, by her choice
 Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
 Creation, though life's self were lost in giving birth
 To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
 How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
 Kindled to light the world — aware of sparks that scorch,
 Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings:
 The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
 Shall she be classed? Because of motherhood, each male
 Yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale:
 His strength owned weakness, wit — folly, and courage — fear,
 Beside the female proved male's mistress — only here.
 The fox-dam, hunger-pined, will slay the felon sire
 Who dares assault her whelp: the beaver, stretched on fire,
 Will die without a groan: no pang avails to wreat
 Her young from where they hide — her sanctuary breast.
 What's here then? Answer me, thou dead one, as, I trow,
 Standing at God's own bar, he bids thee answer now!
 Thrice crowned wast thou — each crown of pride, a child — thy charge!
 Where are they? Lost? Enough: no need that thou enlarge
 On how or why the loss: life left to utter 'lost'
 Condemns itself beyond appeal. The soldier's post
 Guards from the foe's attack the camp he sentinels:
 That he no traitor proved, this and this only tells —
 Over the corpse of him trod foe to foe's success.
 Yet — one by one thy crowns torn from thee — thou no less

To scare the world, shame God, — livedst!
 I hold He saw
 The unexampled sin, ordained the novel law,
 Whereof first instrument was first intelligence
 Found loyal here. I hold that, failing human sense,
 The very earth had oped, sky fallen, to efface
 Humanity's new wrong, motherhood's first disgrace.
 Earth oped not, neither fell the sky, for prompt was found
 A man and man enough, head-sober and heart-sound,
 Ready to hear God's voice, resolute to obey.
 Ivàn Ivànovitch, I hold, has done, this day,
 No otherwise than did, in ages long ago,
 Moses when he made known the purport of that flow
 Of fire athwart the law's twain-tables! I proclaim
 Ivàn Ivànovitch God's servant!"

At which name
 Uprose that creepy whisper from out the crowd, is wont
 To swell and surge and sink when fellow-men confront
 A punishment that falls on fellow flesh and blood,
 Appallingly beheld — shudderingly understood,
 No less, to be the right, the just, the merciful.
 "God's servant!" hissed the crowd.
 When that Amen grew dull
 And died away and left acquittal plain adjudged.
 "Amen!" last sighed the lord. "There's none shall say I grudged
 Escape from punishment in such a novel case.
 Deferring to old age and holy life, — be grace
 Granted! say I. No less, scruples might shake a sense
 Firmer than I boast mine. Law's law, and evidence
 Of breach therein lies plain, — blood-red-bright, — all may see!
 Yet all absolve the deed: absolved the deed must be!

"And next — as mercy rules the hour — methinks 'twere well
 You signify forthwith its sentence, and dispel
 The doubts and fears, I judge, which busy now the head
 Law puts a halter round — a halo — you, instead!

Ivàn Ivànovitch — what think you he expects
 Will follow from his feat? Go, tell him —
 law protects
 Murder, for once: no need he longer keep behind
 The Sacred Pictures — where skulks Innocence enshrined,
 Or I missay! Go, some! You others, haste and hide
 The dismal object there: get done, what-e'er betide!"

So, while the youngsters raised the corpse, the elders trooped
 Silently to the house: where halting, some — one stooped,
 Listened beside the door; all there was silent too.

o Then they held counsel; then pushed door and, passing through,
 Stood in the murderer's presence.

Ivàn Ivànovitch
 Knelt, building on the floor that Kremlin rare and rich
 He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights.
 Some five young faces watched, breathlessly, as, to rights,
 Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete.
 Stèscha, Ivàn's old mother, sat spinning by the heat
 Of the oven where his wife Kàtia stood baking bread.
 Ivàn's self, as he turned his honey-coloured head,
 Was just in act to drop, 'twixt fir-cones, — each a dome, —

20 The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home
 Of Kolokol the Big: the bell, therein to hitch,
 — An acorn-cup — was ready: Ivàn Ivànovitch
 Turned with it in his mouth.

They told him he was free
 As air to walk abroad. "How other-wise?" asked he.

TRAY.

SING me a hero! Quench my thirst
 Of soul, ye bards!

Quoth Bard the first:
 "Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
 His helm and eke his habergeon . . ."
 Sir Olaf and his bard — —!

30 "That sin-scathed brow" (quoth Bard the second)
 "That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned

My hero to some steep, beneath
 Which precipice smiled tempting death . . .
 You too without your host have reckoned!

"A beggar-child" (let's hear this third!)
 "Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
 Sang to herself at careless play,
 And fell into the stream. 'Dismay!
 Help, you the standers-by!' None stirred.

"Bystanders reason, think of wives
 And children ere they risk their lives.
 Over the balustrade has bounced
 A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
 Plumb on the prize. 'How well he dives!

"Up he comes with the child, see, tight
 In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
 A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet!
 Good dog! What, off again? There's yet
 Another child to save? All right!

"How strange we saw no other fall!
 It's instinct in the animal.
 Good dog! But he's a long while under:
 If he got drowned I should not wonder —
 Strong current, that against the wall!"

"Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
 — What may the thing be? Well, that's prime!
 Now, did you ever? Reason reigns
 In man alone, since all Tray's pains
 Have fished — the child's doll from the
 slime!"

"And so, amid the laughter gay,
 Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —
 Till somebody, prerogative
 With reason, reasoned: 'Why he dived,
 His brain would show us, I should say.

"John, go and catch — or, if needs be,
 Purchase — that animal for me!
 By vivisection, at expense
 Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
 How brain secretes dog's soul, we'll see!"

NED BRATTS.

[See John Bunyan's inimitable "Life and Death of Mr. Badman," where the story is told as only Bunyan can tell a story.]

'Twas Bedford Special Assize, one daft 70
 Midsummer's Day:
 A broiling blasting June, — was never its
 like, men say.
 Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees
 looked yellow as that;

- Ponds drained dust-dry, the cattle lay
foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept
bibbing beer
While the parsons prayed for rain. 'Twas
horrible, yes — but queer:
Queer — for the sun laughed gay, yet
nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade: as given
to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such
worldly ways,
And the world's old self about to end in a
merry blaze.
Midsummer's Day moreover was the first
of Bedford Fair,
With Bedford Town's tag-rag and bobtail
a-bowsing there.
- o But the Court House, Quality crammed:
through doors ope, windows wide,
High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships
side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed
learned Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge: like
threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a
furnace. Why?
Because their lungs breathed flame — the
regular crowd forbye —
From gentry pouring in — quite a nose-
gay, to be sure!
How else could they pass the time, six
mortal hours endure
Till night should extinguish day, when
matters might haply mend?
Meanwhile no bad resource was — watch-
ing begin and end
- so Some trial for life and death, in a brisk
five minutes' space,
And betting which knave would 'scape,
which hang, from his sort of face.
- So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and
a deal of work was done
(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the
crazy sun
As this and t'other lout, struck dumb at
the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor
answered "Boh!"
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should
not — because Jack Nokes
Had stolen the horse — be hanged: for
Judges must have their jokes,
And louts must make allowance — let's
say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the
frizzles stuck awry —
- so Else Tom had fleeced scot-free, so nearly
over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure,
the gentles enjoyed their fun,
- As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans
caught at prayer
In a cow-house and laid by the heels, —
have at 'em, devil may care! —
And ten were prescribed the whip, and ten
a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose — just leaving
enough to tweak.
- Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement
steeped in fire,
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles
to heart's desire,
The Court a-simmer with smoke, one fer-
ment of oozy flesh,
One spirituous humming musk mount-
mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant 40
Postlethwayte
— Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped
his oily pate —
Cried "Silence, or I grow grease! No
loophole lets in air?
Jurymen, — Guilty, Death! Gainsay me
if you dare!"
— Things at this pitch, I say, — what hub-
bub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what
rudest of uproars?
- Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk
comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks, — no manner of use! —
spite of them rolls at last
Into the midst a ball which, bursting,
brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his
big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both . . . were 50
never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils
— snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths a-gape ready to
swallow flame!
Horried, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet,
all the same,
Mixed with a certain . . . eh? how shall
I dare style — mirth
The desperate grin of the guess that, could
they break from earth,
Heaven was above, and hell might rage in
impotence
Below the saved, the saved!
- "Confound you! (no offence!)
Out of our way, — push, wife! Yonder
their Worship be!"
Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and "Hey,
my Lords," roars he,
"A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime 60
of the land,
Constables, javelineers, — all met, if I
understand,

- To decide so knotty a point as whether
'twas Jack or Joan
Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit
the King's Arms with a stone,
Dropped the baby down the well, left the
tithesman in the lurch,
Or, three whole Sundays running, not once
attended church!
What a pothor — do these deserve the
parish-stocks or whip,
More or less brow to brand, much or little
nose to snip, —
When, in our Public, plain stand we —
that's we stand here,
I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of
beef and beer,
— Do not we, slut? Step forth and show
your beauty, jade!
10 Wife of my bosom — that's the word now!
What a trade
We drove! None said us nay: nobody
loved his life
So little as wag a tongue against us, — did
they, wife?
Yet they knew us all the while, in their
hearts, for what we are
— Worst couple, rogue and quean, un-
hanged — search near and far!
Eh, Tab? The pedlar, now — o'er his
noggin — who warned a mate
To cut and run, nor risk his pack where
its loss of weight
Was the least to dread, — aha, how we
two laughed a-good
As, stealing round the midden, he came
on where I stood
With billet poised and raised, — you, ready
with the rope, —
20 Ah, but that's past, that's sin repented of
we hope!
Men knew us for that same, yet safe and
sound stood we!
The lily-livered knaves knew too (I've
balked a d——)
Our keeping the 'Pied Bull' was just a
mere pretence:
Too slow the pounds make food, drink,
lodging, from out the pence!
There's not a stoppage to travel has
chanced, this ten long year,
No break into hall or grange, no lifting of
nag or steer,
Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a
purse
To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll.
Od's curse!
When Gipsy-Smouch made bold to cheat
us of our due,
30 — Eh, Tab? the Squire's strong-box we
helped the rascal to —
I think he pulled a face, next Sessions'
swinging-time!
He danced the jig that needs no floor, —
and, here's the prime,
- 'Twas Scroggs that houghed the mare!
Ay, those were busy days!
- "Well, there we flourished brave, like
scripture-trees called bays,
Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to
head
— Not to say, boots and shoes, when . . .
Zounds, I nearly said —
Lord, to unlearn one's language! How
shall we labour, wife?
Have you, fast hold, the Book? Grasp,
grip it, for your life!
See, sirs, here's life, salvation! Here's —
hold but out my breath —
When did I speak so long without once 40
swearing? 'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and
boy! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book: book?
don't say 'book' — they're plays,
Songs, ballads and the like: here's no such
strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven
stars out full-flare!
Tab, help and tell! I'm hoarse. A mug!
or — no, a prayer!
Dip for one out of the Book! Who wrote
it in the Jail
— He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs,
I'll be bail!
- "I've got my second wind. In trundles
she — that's Tab.
'Why, Gammer, what's come now, that — 50
bobbing like a crab
On Yule-tide bowl — your head's a-work
and both your eyes
Break loose? Afeard, you fool? As if
the dead can rise!
Say — Bagman Dick was found last May
with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth: to choke's a natural
mishap!
'Gaffer, be — blessed,' cries she, 'and Bag-
man Dick as well!
I, you, and he are damned: this Public is
our hell:
We live in fire: live coals don't feel! —
Once quenched, they learn —
Cinders do, to what dust they moulder
while they burn!
- "If you don't speak straight out,' says I 30
— belike I swore —
'A knobstick, well you know the taste of
shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid!' She ups
with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. 'Well, pad on, my
prate-apace!
- "I've been about those laces we need for
. . . never rained!

If henceforth they tie hands, 'tis mine
they'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best — the
Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gospelling, twelve years ago:
no age
To try another trade, — yet, so he scorned
to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself
the make
Of laces, tagged and tough — Dick Bag-
man found them so!
Good customers were we! Well, last
week, you must know
His girl, — the blind young chit, who
hawks about his wares, —
She takes it in her head to come no more
— such airs
These hussies have! Yet, since we need
a stoutish lace, —
"I'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to
his face!"
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and
then,
Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to
their den —
Patmore — they style their prison! I tip
the turnkey, catch
My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift
the latch —
Both arms a-kimbo, in bounce with a good
round oath
Ready for rapping out: no "Lawks" nor
"By my troth!"
"There sat my man, the father. He
looked up: what one feels
When heart that leapt to mouth drops
down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when
drinking out the night,
And in, the day, earth grow another some-
thing quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very
stone.
"Woman!" (a fiery tear he put in every
tone),
"How should my child frequent your house
where lust is sport,
Violence — trade? Too true! I trust
no vague report.
Her angel's hand, which stops the sight of
sin, leaves clear
The other gate of sense, lets outrage
through the ear.
What has she heard! — which, heard shall
never be again.
Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the
— wain
Or reign or train — of Charles!" (His
language was not ours:
'Tis my belief, God spoke: no tinker has
such powers).

"Bread, only bread they bring — my laces:
if we broke
Your lump of leavened sin, the loaf's first
crumb would choke!"
"Down on my marrow-bones! Then all
at once rose he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes
were suns to see:
Up went his hands: "Through flesh, I
reach, I read thy soul!
So may some stricken tree look blasted,
bough and bole,
Champed by the fire-tooth, charred with-
out, and yet, thrice-bound
With dremiment about, within may life be
found,
A prisoned power to branch and blossom 40
as before,
Could but the gardener cleave the cloister,
reach the core,
Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help
be found?
Who says 'How save it?' — nor 'Why
cumberbs it the ground?'
Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed
about with scurf,
Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-
roots sting the turf!
Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder
gnash and gnarl
Thine outward, case thy soul with coating
like the marle
Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath
his hoof!
And how deliver such? The strong men
keep aloof,
Lover and friend stand far, the mocking 50
ones pass by,
Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul,
despair and die!
What then? 'Look unto me and be ye
saved!' saith God:
'I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream
at my rod!
Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem
like, — although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven
snow!"
"There, there, there! All I seem to
somehow understand
Is — that, if I reached home, 'twas through
the guiding hand
Of his blind girl which led and led me
through the streets
And out of town and up to door again.
What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from 60
their swoon?
A book — this Book she gave at parting.
"Father's boon —
The Book he wrote: it reads as if he spoke
himself:

He cannot preach in bonds, so, — take it
down from shelf
When you want counsel, — think you hear
his very voice!"

"Wicked dear Husband, first despair and
then rejoice!
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of
moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk! There's
greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough! Read, read!"

"Let me take breath, my lords!
I'd like to know, are these — hers, mine,
or Bunyan's words?

I'm 'wildered — scarce with drink, — no-
wise with drink alone!
You'll say, with heat: but heat's no stuff
to split a stone
10 Like this black boulder — this flint heart
of mine: the Book —
That dealt the crashing blow! Sirs, here's
the fist that shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a
just-lugged bear!
You had brained me with a feather: at
once I grew aware
Christmas was meant for me. A burden
at your back,
Good Master Christmas? Nay, — yours
was that Joseph's sack,
— Or whose it was, — which held the cup,
— compared with mine!
Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my
chine,
Adultery . . . nay, Tab, you pitched me
as I flung!
One word, I'll up with fist . . . No, sweet
spouse, hold your tongue!

20 "I'm hasting to the end. The Book, sir,
— take and read!
You have my history in a nutshell, — ay,
indeed!
It must off, my burden! See, — slack
straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there — a
plague on it!
For a mountain's sure to fall and bury
Bedford Town,
'Destruction' — that's the name, and fire
shall burn it down!
O 'scape the wrath in time! Time's now,
if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-
gate?
Next comes Despond the slough: not that
I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave
House Beautiful —
30 But it's late in the day, I reckon: had I
left years ago

Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well,
Christmas did, you know! —
Soon I had met in the valley and tried my
cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged,
a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwack — thwack: they
snap, see! Hoof and hoof —
Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's
sake, keep aloof
Angels! I'm man and match, — this
cudgel for my flail, —
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing
and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else
does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except — hope, hope's
the thing?
Too late! the day for me to thrud the
windings: but
There's still a way to win the race by
death's short cut!
Did Master Faithful need climb the De-
lightful Mounts?
No, straight to Vanity Fair, — a fair, by
all accounts,
Such as is held outside, — lords, ladies,
grand and gay, —
Says he in the face of them, just what you
hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and
brought him out
To die in the market-place — St. Peter's
Green's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed
buffeted, lanced with knives,
Pricked him with swords, — I'll swear
he'd full a cat's nine lives, —
So to his end at last came Faithful, — ha
ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there
stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and
all:
He's in, he's off, he's up, through clouds
at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate
Odds my life —
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even
knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! 'Ta
— do the same by her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that!
Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet
handy close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day! Be kindly
not morose!
There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying
here we stand —
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out
of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A sing-
moment's loss

Means — Satan's lord once more: his
whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my
brain,
'It comes of heat and beer!' — hark how
he guffaws plain!
'To-morrow you'll wake bright, and, in a
safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a
foaming jug!
You've had such qualms before, time out
of mind!' He's right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away,
that night
When home we blindly reeled, and left
poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what . . . some-
body did, you know!
Both of us maundered then 'Lame hump-
back, — never more
Will he come limping, drain his tankard at
our door!
He'll swing, while — somebody . . .
Says Tab, 'No, for I'll peach!'
'I'm for you, Tab,' cries I, 'there's rope
enough for each!'
So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to
bed upon
The grace of Tab's good thought: by
morning, all was gone!
We laughed — 'What's life to him, a
cripple of no account?'
Oh, waves increase around — I feel them
mount and mount!
Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bear-
ward with his bears:
One new black-muzzled brute beats
Sackerson, he swears:
(Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting
o'er, the Brawl
They lead on Turner's Patch, — lads,
lasses, up tails all, —
I'm i' the thick o' the throng! That
means the Iron Cage,
— Means the Lost Man inside! Where's
hope for such as wage
War against light? Light's left, light's
here, I hold light still,
So does Tab — make but haste to hang us
both! You will?"

I promise, when he stopped you might
have heard a mouse
Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up
the old Mote House.
But when the mass of man sank meek upon
his knees,
While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse
"Do hang us, please!"
Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran
with tears,
Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, pay-
ing all past arrears

Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream
outbroke
Of triumph, joy and praise.

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
First mopping brow and cheek, where still,
for one that budged,
Another bead broke fresh: "What Judge,
that ever judged
Since first the world began, judged such a
case as this?
Why, Master Bratts, long since, folk smelt
you out, I wis!
I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you
played the fox
Convicting geese of crime in yonder wit-
ness-box —
Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that 40
stole her eggs
Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's
game, i' feggs!
Yet thus much was to praise — you spoke
to point, direct —
Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury
could suspect —
Dared to suspect, — I'll say, — a spot in
white so clear:
Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof
godly fear
Came of example set, much as our laws
intend;
And, though a fox confessed, you proved
the Judge's friend.
What if I had my doubts? Suppose I
gave them breath,
Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere
'Guilty, Death,' —
Had paid our pains! What heaps of wit- 50
nesses to drag
From holes and corners, paid from out the
County's bag!
Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus*
Curia — that's
Your title, no dispute — truth-telling Mas-
ter Bratts!
Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why
doubt one word you say?
Hanging you both deserve, hanged both
shall be this day!
The tinker needs must be a proper man.
I've heard
He lies in Jail long since: if Quality's good
word
Warrants me letting loose, — some house-
holder, I mean —
Freeholder, better still, — I don't say but
— between
Now and next Sessions . . . Well! Con- 60
sider of his case,
I promise to, at least: we owe him so much
grace.
Not that — no, God forbid! — I lean to
think, as you,

The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's
 due:
 I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious
 reign —
 Astræa Redux, Charles restored his rights
 again!
 — Of which, another time! I somehow
 feel a peace
 Stealing across the world. May deeds like
 this increase!
 So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I
 pronounced
 On those two dozen odd: deserving to be
 trounced
 Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all
 events dispatch

This pair of — shall I say, sinner-saints?
 — ere we catch
 Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or
 I'll indite
 All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bun-
 yanite!"

So, forms were galloped through. If Jus-
 tice, on the spur,
 Proved somewhat expeditious, would
 Quality demur?
 And happily hanged were they, — why
 lengthen out my tale? —
 Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing
 where stood his Jail.

DRAMATIC IDYLS.

SECOND SERIES.

1880.

"You are sick, that's sure" — they say;
 "Sick of what?" — they disagree.
 "'Tis the brain" — thinks Doctor A;
 "'Tis the heart" — holds Doctor B;
 "The liver — my life I'd lay!"
 "The lungs!" "The lights!"

Ah me!

So ignorant of man's whole
 Of bodily organs plain to see —
 So sage and certain, frank and free,
 About what's under lock and key —
 Man's soul!

ECHETLOS.

[“The holder of the ploughshare,” a gigantic figure noticeable during the fight at Marathon slaying the Persians with a ploughshare. After the fight was over the figure was seen no more.]

HERE is a story shall stir you! Stand up,
 Greeks dead and gone,
 Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed
 Persia rolling on,
 Did the deed and saved the world, for the
 day was Marathon!

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and
 fought away
 In his tribe and file: up, back, out, down
 — was the spear-arm play:
 Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all
 spear-arms a-swing that day!

But one man kept no rank and his sole
 arm plied no spear,
 As a flashing came and went, and a form
 i' the van, the rear,
 Brightened the battle up, for he blazed
 now there, now here.

Nor helmed nor shielded, he! but, a goat-
 skin all his wear,
 Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's
 limbs broad and bare,
 Went he ploughing on and on: he pushed
 with a ploughman's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies
 on whom the shark

Precipitates his bulk? Did the right-wing
 halt when, stark
 On his heap of slain lay stretched Kalli-
 machos Polemarch?¹

Did the steady phalanx falter? To the
 rescue, at the need,
 The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing
 Greek earth of weed,
 As he routed through the Sakian and
 rooted up the Mede.

But the deed done, battle won, — nowhere ³⁰
 to be descried
 On the meadow, by the stream, at the
 marsh, — look far and wide
 From the foot of the mountain, no, to the
 last blood-plashed seaside, —

Not anywhere on view blazed the large
 limbs thonged and brown,
 Shearing and clearing still with the share
 before which — down
 To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he
 ploughed for Greece, that clown!

How spake the Oracle? “Care for no
 name at all!
 Say but just this: ‘We praise one helpful
 whom we call
 The Holder of the Ploughshare.’ The
 great deed ne'er grows small.”

Not the great name! Sing — woe for the
 great name Miltiadés
 And its end at Paros isle! Woe for The- ⁴⁰
 mistokles
 — Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the
 clown like these!

CLIVE.

[The famous Robert Clive was born, 1725, in Shropshire. He suffered greatly from low spirits, and twice attempted his life before he had attained manhood. His career in India is well known from Ma-

¹ General. The commander at Marathon was Miltiades, but Kallimachos had presided at the preliminary council of war and given his casting vote in favour of fighting.

caulay's Essay. He fought the battle of Plassy in 1757. He was impeached for various malfeasances, but acquitted. He killed himself in 1774.]

I AND Clive were friends — and why not?

Friends! I think you laugh, my lad. Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives — e'gad, England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to speak

"Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades —" with a tongue thrust in your cheek!

Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive was man,

I was, am and ever shall be — mouse, nay, mouse of all its clan

Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;

While the man Clive — he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever foreign game,

Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch
10 (You away) I sit of evenings, — silence,
save for biscuit-crunch,

Black, unbroken, — thought grows busy,
thrds each pathway of old years,

Notes this forthright, that meander, till
the long-past life appears

Like an outspread map of country plodded
through, each mile and rood,

Once, and well remembered still: I'm
startled in my solitude

Ever and anon by — what's the sudden
mocking light that breaks

On me as I slap the table till no rummer-
glass but shakes

While I ask — aloud, I do believe, God
help me! — "Was it thus?"

Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when
just one step for us —

(Us, — you were not born, I grant, but
surely some day born would be)

20 "— One bold step had gained a province"
(figurative talk, you see)

"Got no end of wealth and honour, — yet
I stood stock still no less?"

— "For I was not Clive," you comment:
but it needs no Clive to guess

Wealth were handy, honour ticklish, did
no writing on the wall

Warn me "Trespasser," ware man-traps!"
Him who braves that notice — call

Hero! none of such heroics suit myself
who read plain words,

Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scrip-
ture says the land's the Lord's:

Louts then — what avail the thousand,
noisy in a smock-frocked ring,

All-agog to have me trespass, clear the
fence, be Clive their king?

Higher warrant must you show me ere I
set one foot before

T'other in that dark direction, though I
stand for evermore

Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Ever-
more? No! By-and-by

Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive
turns out less wise than I.

Don't object "Why call him friend, then?"
Power is power, my boy, and still

Marks a man, — God's gift magnific, e-
xercised for good or ill.

You've your boot now on my hearth-rug,
tread what was a tiger's skin:

Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the
bullet in!

True, he murdered half a village, so his
own death came to pass;

Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage
— ah, the brute he was!

Why, that Clive, — that youth, that green-
horn, that quill-driving clerk, in
fine, —

He sustained a siege in Arcot. . . . But
the world knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring
Clive in? Oh, you mentioned

"fear"! Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a
story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so
when the clouds, about the orb

Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely
threatened to absorb

Ray by ray its noontide brilliance, —
friendship might, with steadier eye

Drawing near, bear what had burned close
now no blaze — all majesty.

Too much bee's-wing floats my figure
Well, suppose a castle's new:

None presume to climb its ramparts, no
find foothold sure for shoe

'Twixt those squares and squares of granite
plating the impervious pile

As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a
crocodile.

Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm
dismantled? From without

Scrambling up by crack and crevice, ever
cockney prates about

Towers — the heap he kicks now! turret
— just the measure of his cane!

Will that do? Observe moreover —
(same similitude again) —

Such a castle seldom crumble: Ly shee
stress of cannonade:

'Tis when foes are foiled and fighting
finished that vile rains invade,

Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-bird
congregating find no holes

Fit to build in like the topmost socket
made for banner-poles.

So Clive crumbled slow in London —
crashed at last.

A week before,
 Dining with him, — after trying church-
 yard-chat of days of yore, —
 Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones,
 head-piece, foot-piece, when they lean
 Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er
 a coffined Past between.
 As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the
 soul's extinguishment
 By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the
 furtive fingers went
 Where a drug-box skulked behind the
 honest liquor, — "One more throw
 Try for Clive!" thought I: "Let's venture
 some good rattling question!"
 So —
 "Come, Clive, tell us" — out I blurted —
 "what to tell in turn, years hence,
 When my boy — suppose I have one —
 asks me on what evidence
 I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a
 warrior every whit
 Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marl-
 boroughs and — what said Pitt? —
 Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told
 me once" — I want to say —
 "Which feat out of all those famous doings
 bore the bell away
 — In his own calm estimation, mark you,
 not the mob's rough guess —
 Which stood foremost as evincing what
 Clive called courageousness!
 Come! what moment of the minute, what
 speck-centre in the wide
 Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly
 deified?
 (Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow
 bold this wholesome Port!)
 If a friend has leave to question, — when
 were you most brave, in short?"
 Up he arched his brows o' the instant —
 formidably Clive again!
 "When was I most brave? I'd answer,
 were the instance half as plain
 As another instance that's a brain-lodged
 crystal — curse it! — here
 Freezing when my memory touches —
 ough! — the time I felt most fear.
 Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed
 fear — anyhow,
 Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered,
 since I shiver now."
 "Fear!" smiled I. "Well, that's the
 rarer: that's a specimen to seek,
 Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks*,
Lord Clive's Fear, Unique!"
 Down his brows dropped. On the table
 painfully he pored as though
 Tracing, in the stains and streaks there,
 thoughts encrusted long ago.
 When he spoke 'twas like a lawyer reading
 word by word some will,

Some blind jungle of a statement, — beat-
 ing on and on until
 Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

"This fell in my factor-days.
 Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one
 must game, or drink, or craze.
 I chose gaming: and, — because your
 high-flown gamesters hardly take
 Umbrage at a factor's elbow if the factor
 pays his stake, —
 I was winked at in a circle where the com-
 pany was choice,
 Captain This and Major That, men high
 of colour, loud of voice,
 Yet indulgent, condescending to the mod-
 est juvenile
 Who not merely risked but lost his hard-
 earned guineas with a smile.

"Down I sat to cards, one evening, — had
 for my antagonist
 Somebody whose name's a secret — you'll
 know why — so, if you list,
 Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son
 of Mars from head to heel!
 Play commenced: and, whether Cocky
 fancied that a clerk must feel
 Quite sufficient honour came of bending
 over one green baize,
 I the scribe with him the warrior, — guessed
 no penman dared to raise
 Shadow of objection should the honour
 stay but playing end
 More or less abruptly, — whether disin-
 clined he grew to spend
 Practice strictly scientific on a booby born
 to stare
 At — not ask of — lace-and-ruffles if the
 hand they hide plays fair, —
 Anyhow, I marked a movement when he
 bade me 'Cut!'"

"I rose.
 'Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I'm
 a novice: knowledge grows.
 What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?'"

"Never did a thunder-clap
 Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with
 Chloe in his lap,
 As my word and gesture (down I flung my
 cards to join the pack)
 Fired the man of arms, whose visage,
 simply red before, turned black.

When he found his voice, he stammered
 "That expression once again!"

"Well, you forced a card and cheated!"

"Possibly a factor's brain,
 Busied with his all-important balance
 accounts, may deem

Weighing words superfluous trouble: *cheat* to clerkly ears may seem
 Just the joke for friends to venture: but we are not friends, you see!
 When a gentleman is joked with, — if he's good at repartee,
 He rejoins, as do I — Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw in full!
 Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through your skull
 Lets in light and teaches manners to what brain it finds! Choose quick —
 Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim yon candle-wick!

“Well, you cheated!”

“Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
 To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched and teeth were ground.
 ‘End it! no time like the present! Captain, yours were our disgrace!
 No delay, begin and finish! Stand back, leave the pair a space!
 Let civilians be instructed: henceforth simply ply the pen,
 Fly the sword! This clerk’s no swordsmen? Suit him with a pistol, then!
 Even odds! A dozen paces ’twixt the most and least expert
 Make a dwarf a giant’s equal: nay, the dwarf, if he’s alert,
 Likelier hits the broader target!’

“Up we stood accordingly.
 As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul’s thirst to try
 Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on and stamp out
 Every spark of his existence, that, — crept close to, curled about
 By that toying tempting teasing fool-finger’s middle joint, —
 Don’t you guess? — the trigger yielded. Gone my chance! and at the point
 Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch above his head
 Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I was dead.

Up he marched in flaming triumph — ’twas his right, mind! — up, within just an arm’s length. ‘Now, my clerkling,’ chuckled Cocky with a grin
 As the levelled piece quite touched me, ‘Now, Sir Counting-House, repeat That expression which I told you proved bad manners! Did I cheat?’

“Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this moment, know as well.
 As for me, my homely breeding bids you — fire and go to Hell!”

“Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy barrel, flurried wrist,
 Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, ‘Laugh at Hell who list,
 I can’t! God’s no fable either. Did this boy’s eye wink once? No!
 There’s no standing him and Hell and God all three against me, — so,
 I did cheat!’

“And down he threw the pistol, out rushed — by the door
 Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or floor,
 He effected disappearance — I’ll engage no glance was sent
 That way by a single starrer, such a blank astonishment
 Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking — mute they stood as mice.

“Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a hubbub in a trice!
 ‘Rogue and rascal! Who’d have thought it? What’s to be expected next,
 When His Majesty’s Commission serves a sharper as pretext
 For . . . But where’s the need of wasting time now? Nought requires delay:
 Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be wiped away
 Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No, indeed
 Drum and life must play the Rogue’s March, rank and file be free to speed
 Tardy marching on the rogue’s part by appliance in the rear
 — Kicks administered shall right this wronged civilian, — never fear,
 Mister Clive, for — though a clerk — you bore yourself — suppose we say —
 Just as would beseem a soldier!’

“Gentlemen, attention — pray! First, one word!”

“I passed each speaker severally in review.
 When I had precise their number, names and styles, and fully knew
 Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend, — why, then —

“Some five minutes since, my life lay — as you all saw, gentlemen —
 At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single voice was raised
 In arrest of judgment, not one tongue — before my powder blazed —
 Ventured “Can it be the youngster blundered, really seemed to mark
 Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the dark,

Guess at random, — still, for sake of fair play — what if for a freak,
 In a fit of absence, — such things have been! — if our friend proved weak
 — What's the phrase? — corrected fortune! Look into the case, at least!"

Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and the priest?
 Yet he spared me! You cleven! Whosoever, all or each,
 To the disadvantage of the man who spared me, utters speech
 — To his face, behind his back, — that speaker has to do with me:
 Me who promise, if positions change and mine the chance should be,
 Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!"

"Twenty-five Years ago this matter happened: and 'tis certain," added Clive,
 "Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a single breath
 Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout his life, or since his death,
 For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than you.

All I know is — Cocky had one chance more; how he used it, — grew
 Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back again
 Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in his train, —
 That's for you to judge. Reprieve I procured, at any rate.
 Ugh — the memory of that minute's fear makes gooseflesh rise! Why prate
 Longer? You've my story, there's your instance: fear I did, you see!"

"Well" — I hardly kept from laughing —
 "if I see it, thanks must be
 Wholly to your Lordship's candour. Not that — in a common case —
 When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
 I should underrate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
 'Tis no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.
 Fear I naturally look for — unless, of all men alive,
 I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
 Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death — the whole world knows —
 Came to somewhat closer quarters."

Quarters? Had we come to blows,
 Clive and I, you had not wondered — up he sprang so, out he rapped
 Such a round of oaths — no matter! I'll endeavour to adapt

To our modern usage words he — well, 'twas friendly licence — flung
 At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

"You — a soldier? You — at Plassy?
 Yours the faculty to nick
 Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
 — At his mercy, at his malice, — has you, through some stupid inch
 Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open, — not to flinch
 — That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,
 Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
 Distant from my temple, — curse him! — quietly had bade me 'There!
 Keep your life, calumniator! — worthless a life I freely spare:
 Mine you freely would have taken — murdered me and my good fame
 Both at once — and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
 Which permits me to forgive you! What if, with such words as these,
 He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
 Nay, I'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained —
 Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. I so had gained
 Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
 Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will."

"Such the turn," said I, "the matter takes with you? Then I abate
 — No, by not one jot nor tittle, — of your 5c act my estimate.
 Fear — I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain enough —
 Call it desperation, madness — never mind! for here's in rough
 Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.
 True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God's face
 — None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
 Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign climes
 Rub some marks away — not all, though! We poor sinners reach life's brink,
 Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think
 There's advantage in what's left us — ground to stand on, time to call
 'Lord, have mercy!' ere we topple over — 6a do not leap, that's all!"

Oh, he made no answer, — re-absorbed
into his cloud. I caught
Something like "Yes — courage: only
fools will call it fear."

If aught

Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive,
in that I heard,

Next week, how your own hand dealt you
doom, and uttered just the word

"Fearfully courageous!" — this, be sure,
and nothing else I groaned.

I'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's
worst deed — we'll hope condoned.

MULÉYKEH.

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn,
he cried "A churl's!"

Or haply "God help the man who has
neither salt nor bread!"

— "Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he
needs nor pity nor scorn

10 More than who spends small thought on
the shore-sand, picking pearls,

— Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort,
bears instead

On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb
which of night makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the
son of Sinán?

They went when his tribe was mulct, ten
thousand camels the due,

Blood-value paid perforce for a murder
done of old.

'God gave them, let them go! But never
since time began,

Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master
the match of you,

And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh
at men's land and gold!"

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn
— and right, I say.

20 Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Out-
stripping all,

Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the
victor's staff.

Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed
and named, that day.

'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,'
as we use to call

Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth.
Right, Hóseyn, I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the
stranger replies: "Be sure

On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but
lavish both

On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers
away in heart

For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness
admits no cure.

A certain poet has sung, and sealed the
same with an oath,
'For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The
Pearl is a prize apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding
to Hóseyn's tent,

And he casts his saddle down, and enters
and "Peace!" bids he.

"You are poor, I know the cause: my
plenty shall mend the wrong.

'Tis said of your Pearl — the price of a
hundred camels spent

In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such
prudence is far from me

Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long
parley may last too long."

Said Hóseyn "You feed young beasts a
many, of famous breed,

Slit-eared, unblemish'd, fat, true offspring
of Múzennem:

There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the
line as it climbs the hill.

But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront
whitens indeed

Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest.
Your camels — go gaze on them!

Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself
am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again
rides Duhl.

"You are open-hearted, ay — moist-
handed, a very prince.

Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare
your simple gift!

My son is pined to death for her beauty:
my wife prompts 'Fool,

Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the
rewarder, since

God pays debts seven for one; who
squanders on Him shows thrift."

Said Hóseyn "God gives each man one
life, like a lamp, then gives

That lamp due measure of oil: lamp
lighted — hold high, wave wide

Its comfort for others to share! once
quench it, what help is left?

The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine
while Muléykeh lives.

Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if
Muléykeh died?

It is life against life: what good avails to
the life-bereft?"

Another year, and — hist! What craft
is it Duhl designs?

He alights not at the door of the tent as he
did last time,

But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy
way by the trench

Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber — and such is he: Duhl,
covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl,
by whatever the wretch.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted
with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous
like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chaffered with
such an one!
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the
creature he rode: nay, more —
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he
torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the
tale of my wife and son.

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will
I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing
I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we
must live or die:
Let him die, then, — let me live! Be bold
— but not too rash!
I have found me a peeping-place: breast,
bury your breathing while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He
deceived me not, the spy!

"As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyn
— how happy! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her
headstall about his wrist:
'Tis therefore he sleeps so sound — the
moon through the roof reveals.
And, loose on his left, stands too that other,
known far and wide,
Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet
ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past
the thunderous heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled,
this second, in case some thief
Should enter and seize and fly with the first,
as I mean to do.
What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once
mount her we both escape."
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, —
so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining
a nest: clean through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned,
he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled
the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he
leaves thrice bound as before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the 30
desert like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his
breast though the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a
minute more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh,
whose worth we know!

And Hóseyn — his blood turns flame, he
has learned long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain
— they are gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-
Dárraj to cross and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no
safety till that be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a
horse-length off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel,
the touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her 40
rider the strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister
she shall and must
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so
clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are
neck by croup — joy! fear!
What folly makes Hóseyn shout "Dog
Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your
foot my Pearl's left flank!"

And Duhl was wise at the word, and
Muléykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to
hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and vanished
for evermore.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as
who, all bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the 50
living may:
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow
homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn
upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbours came, the
tribesmen of Bénu-Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they
questioned him of his grief;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-
like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode
like an ape, so bad!
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl
remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor
Hóseyn is crazed past hope!

How else had he wrought himself his ruin,
 in fortune's spite?
 To have simply held the tongue were a
 task for a boy or girl,
 And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed
 like an antelope,
 The child of his heart by day, the wife of
 his breast by night!" —
 "And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn:
 "You never have loved my Pearl."

PIETRO OF ABANO.

[An Italian physician, born 1246, died
 1320. Professor of Medicine at Padua.
 Accused of the black arts, but died in time
 to avoid being burnt. A voluminous
 author on occult and semi-scientific sub-
 jects.]

Petrus Aponensis — there was a magician!
 When that strange adventure happened,
 which I mean to tell my hearers,
 Nearly had he tried all trades — beside
 physician,
 Architect, astronomer, astrologer, — or
 worse:

10 How else, as the old books warrant, was he
 able,
 All at once, through all the world, to prove
 the promptest of appearers
 Where was prince to cure, tower to build as
 high as Babel,
 Star to name or sky-sign read, — yet
 pouch, for pains, a curse?

— Curse: for when a vagrant, — foot-sore,
 travel-tattered,
 Now a young man, now an old man, Turk
 or Arab, Jew or Gipsy, —
 Proffered folk in passing — O for pay, what
 mattered? —

"I'll be doctor, I'll play builder, star I'll
 name — sign read!"
 Soon as prince was cured, tower built, and
 fate predicted,

"Who may you be?" came the question;
 when he answered, "*Petrus ipse*,"

20 "Just as we divined!" cried folk — "A
 wretch convicted
 Long ago of dealing with the devil — you
 indeed!"

So, they cursed him roundly, all his labour's
 payment,

Motioned him — the convalescent prince
 would — to vacate the presence:

Babylonians plucked his beard and tore
 his raiment,

Drove him from that tower he built: while,
 had he peered at stars,

Town howled "Stone the quack who styles
 our Dog-star — Sirius!"

Country yelled "Aroint the churl who
 prophesies we take no pleasance
 Under vine and fig-tree, since the year's
 delirious,
 Bears no crop of any kind, — all through
 the planet Mars!"

Straightway would the whilom youngster
 grow a grisard,

Or, as case might hap, the hoary eld drop
 off and show a stripling.

Town and country groaned — indebted
 to a wizard!

"Curse — nay, kick and cuff him — fit
 requital of his pains!

Gratitude in word or deed were wasted
 truly!

Rather make the Church amends by crying
 out on, cramping, crippling

One who, on pretence of serving man,
 serves duly

Man's arch foe: not ours, be sure, but
 Satan's — his the gains!"

Peter grinned and bore it, such disgrace-
 ful usage:

Somehow, cuffs and kicks and curses seem
 ordained his like to suffer:

Prophet's pay with Christians, now as in 4
 the Jews' age,

Still is — stoning: so, he meekly took his
 wage and went,

— Safe again was found ensconced in those
 old quarters,

Padua's blackest blindest by-street, —
 none the worse, nay, somewhat
 tougher:

"Calculating," quoth he, "soon I join the
 martyrs,

Since, who magnify my lore on burning me
 are bent."¹

Therefore, on a certain evening, to his
 alley

Peter slunk, all bruised and broken, sore
 in body, sick in spirit,

Just escaped from Cairo where he launched
 a galley

Needing neither sails nor oars nor help of
 wind or tide,

¹ "Studiando le mie cifre col compasso,

Rilevo che sarò presto sotterra,

Perchè del mio saper si fa gran chiasso,

E gl'ignoranti m'hanno mosso guerra."

Said to have been found in a well at Abano in
 the last century. They were extemporaneously
 Englished thus: not as Father Prout chose to
 prefer them:—

Studying my ciphers with the compass,

I reckon — I soon shall be below-ground;

Because of my lore folk make great rumpus,

And war on myself makes each dull rogue
 round. — R. B.

— Needing but the fume of fire to set
a-flying
Wheels like mad which whirled you quick
— North, South, where'er you pleased
require it, —
That is — would have done so had not
priests come prying,
Broke his engine up and bastinadoed him
beside.

As he reached his lodging, stopped there
unmolested,
(Neighbours feared him, urchins fled him,
few were bold enough to follow)
While his fumbling fingers tried the lock
and tested
Once again the queer key's virtue, oped the
sullen door, —
Someone plucked his sleeve, cried "Mas-
ter, pray your pardon!
Grant a word to me who patient wait you
in your archway's hollow!
Hard on you men's hearts are: be not your
heart hard on
Me who kiss your garment's hem, O
Lord of magic lore!

"Mage — say I, who no less, scorning
tittle-tattle,
To the vulgar give no credence when they
prate of Peter's magic,
Deem his art brews tempest, hurts the
crops and cattle,
Hinders fowls from laying eggs and worms
from spinning silk,
Rides upon a he-goat, mounts at need a
broomstick:
While the price he pays for this (so turns
to comic what was tragic)
Is — he may not drink — dreads like the
Day of Doom's tick —
One poor drop of sustenance ordained mere
men — that's milk!

"Tell such tales to Padua! Think me no
such dullard!
Not from these benighted parts did I derive
my breath and being!
I am from a land whose cloudless skies are
coloured
Livelier, suns orb largelier, airs seem in-
cense, — while, on earth —
What, instead of grass, our fingers and our
thumbs cull,
Proves true moly! sounds and sights there
help the body's hearing, seeing,
Till the soul grows godlike: brief, — you
front no numbscull
Shaming by ineptitude the Greece that
gave him birth!

"Mark within my eye its iris mystic-let-
tered —

That's my name! and note my ear — its
swan-shaped cavity, my emblem!
Mine's the swan-like nature born to fly
unfettered
Over land and sea in search of knowledge
— food for song.
Art denied the vulgar! Geese grow fat on
barley,
Swans require ethereal provend, undesir-
ous to resemble 'em —
Soar to seek Apollo, — favoured with a
parley
Such as, Master, you grant me — who will
not hold you long.

"Leave to learn to sing — for that your
swan petitions:
Master, who possess the secret, say not nay
to such a suitor!
All I ask is — bless mine, purest of am-
bitions!
Grant me leave to make my kind wise, 40
free, and happy! How?
Just by making me — as you are mine —
their model!
Geese have goose-thoughts: make a swan
their teacher first, then coadjutor, —
Let him introduce swan-notions to each
noddle, —
Geese will soon grow swans, and men be-
come what I am now!

"That's the only magic — had but fools
discernment,
Could they probe and pass into the solid
through the soft and seeming!
Teach me such true magic — now and no
adjournment!
Teach your art of making fools subserve
the man of mind!
Magic is the power we men of mind should
practise,
Draw fools to become our drudges, docile 50
henceforth, never dreaming —
While they do our hests for fancied gain —
the fact is
What they toil and moil to get proves false-
hood: truth's behind!

"See now! you conceive some fabric —
say, a mansion
Meet for monarch's pride and pleasure:
this truth — a thought has fired you,
Made you fain to give some cramped con-
cept expansion,
Put your faculty to proof, fulfil your na-
ture's task.
First you fascinate the monarch's self: he
fancies
He it was devised the scheme you execute
as he inspired you:
He in turn sets slaving insignificances
Toiling, moiling till your structure stands 60
there — all you ask!

"Soon the monarch's known for what he was — a ninny:
 Soon the rabble-rout leave labour, take their work-day wage and vanish:
 Soon the late puffed bladder, pricked, shows lank and skinny —
 'Who was its inflator?' ask we, 'whose the giant lungs?'
*Petri en pulmones!*¹ What though men prove ingrates?
 Let them — so they stop at crucifixion — buffet, ban and banish!
 Peter's power's apparent: human praise — its din grates
 Harsh as blame on ear unused to aught save angels' tongues.

"Ay, there have been always, since our world existed,
 to Mages who possessed the secret — needed but to stand still, fix eye
 On the foolish mortal: straight was he enlisted
 Soldier, scholar, servant, slave — no matter for the style!
 Only through illusion; ever what seemed profit —
 Love or lucre — justified obedience to the
Ipse dixi:
 Work done — palace reared from pavement up to soffit —
 Was it strange if builders smelt out cheating all the while?

"Let them pelt and pound, bruise, bray you in a mortar!
 What's the odds to you who seek reward of quite another nature?
 You've enrolled your name where sages of your sort are,
 20 — Michael of Constantinople, Hans of Halberstadt!
 Nay and were you nameless, still you've your conviction
 You it was and only you — what signifies the nomenclature? —
 Ruled the world in fact, though how you ruled be fiction
 Fit for fools: true wisdom's magic you — if e'er man — had't!

"But perhaps you ask me 'Since each ignoramus
 While he profits by such magic persecutes the benefactor,
 What should I expect but — once I render famous
 You as Michael, Hans and Peter — just one ingrate more?
 If the vulgar prove thus, whatsoe'er the pelf be,

¹ Lo! the lungs of Peter.

Pouched through my beneficence — and doom me dungeoned, chained, or racked, or
 Fairly burned outright — how grateful will yourself be
 When, his secret gained, you match your — master just before?"

"That's where I await you! Please, revert a little!
 What do folk report about you if not this — which, though chimeric,
 Still, as figurative, suits you to a tittle — That, — although the elements obey your nod and wink,
 Fades or flowers the herb you chance to smile or sigh at,
 While your frown bids earth quake pall by obscuration atmospheric, —
 Brief, although through nature nought resists your fiat,
 There's yet one poor substance mocks you 40 — milk you may not drink!

"Figurative language! Take my explanation!
 Fame with fear, and hate with homage, these your art procures in plenty.
 All's but daily dry bread: what makes moist the ration?
 Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal — alas, you lack:
 I am he who, since he fears you not, can love you.
 Love is born of heart not mind, *de corde natus haud de mente;*
 Touch my heart and love's yours, sure as shines above you
 Sun by day and star by night though earth should go to wrack!

"Stage by stage you lift me — kiss by kiss, I hallow
 Whose but your dear hand my helper, 50 punctual as at each new impulse
 I approach my aim? Shell chipped, the eaglet callow
 Needs a parent's pinion-push to quit the cyrie's edge:
 But once fairly launched forth, denizen of æther,
 While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through each limb pulse,
 Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
 Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge!"

Then did Peter's tristful visage lighten somewhat,
 Vent a watery smile as though inveterate mistrust were thawing.
 "Well, who knows?" he slow broke silence. "Mortals — come what

Come there may — are still the dupes of
 hope there's luck in store.
 Many scholars seek me, promise mounts
 and marvels:
 Here stand I to witness how they step
 'twixt me and clapperclawing!
 Dry bread, — that I've gained me: truly
 I should starve else:
 But of milk, no drop was mine! Well,
 shuffle cards once more!"

At the word of promise thus implied, our
 stranger —

What can he but cast his arms, in rapture
 of embrace, round Peter?

"Hold! I choke!" the mage grunts.

"Shall I in the manger

Any longer play the dog? Approach, my
 calf, and feed!

Bene . . . won't you wait for grace?"
 But sudden incense

Wool-white, serpent-solid, curled up —
 perfume growing sweet and sweeter

Till it reached the young man's nose and
 seemed to win sense

Soul and all from out his brain through
 nostril: yes, indeed!

Presently the young man rubbed his eyes.
 "Where am I?

Too much bother over books! Some
 reverie has proved amusing.

What did Peter prate of? 'Faith, my
 brow is clammy!

How my head throbs, how my heart
 thumps! Can it be I swooned?

Oh, I spoke my speech out — cribbed
 from Plato's tractate,

Dosed him with 'the Fair and Good,'
 swore — Dog of Egypt — I was choos-

ing

Plato's way to serve men! What's the
 hour? Exact eight!

Home now, and to-morrow never mind
 how Plato mooned!

"Peter has the secret! Fair and Good are
 products

(So he said) of Foul and Evil: one must
 bring to pass the other.

Just as poisons grow drugs, steal through
 sundry odd ducts

Doctors name, and ultimately issue safe
 and changed.

You'd abolish poisons, treat disease with
 dainties

Such as suit the sound and sane? With
 all such kickshaws vain you pother!

Arsenic's the stuff puts force into the faint
 eyes,

Opium sets the brain to rights — by cark
 and care deranged.

"What, he's safe within door? — 'would
 escape — no question —

Thanks, since thanks and more I owe, and
 mean to pay in time befitting.

What most presses now is — after night's
 digestion,

Peter, of thy precepts! — promptest prac-
 tice of the same.

Let me see! The wise man, first of all,
 scorns riches:

But to scorn them must obtain them:
 none believes in his permitting

Gold to lie ungathered: who picks up,
 then pitches

Gold away — philosophises: none dis-
 puts his claim.

"So with worldly honours: 'tis by ab-
 dicating,

Incontestably he proves he could have kept 40
 the crown discarded.

Sulla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating:
 Simpletons laud private life? 'The grapes

are sour,' laugh we.

So, again — but why continue? All's
 tumultuous

Here: my head's a-whirl with knowledge.
 Speedily shall be reward'd

He who taught me! Greeks prove in-
 grates? So insult you us?

When your teaching bears its first-fruits,
 Peter — wait and see!"

As the word, the deed proved; ere a brief
 year's passage,

Fop — that fool he made the jokes on —
 now he made the jokes for, *gratis*:

Hunks — that hoarder, long left lonely in
 his crass age —

Found now one appreciative differential 5^m
 friend:

Powder-paint-and-patch, Hag Jezebel —
 recovered,

Strange to say, the power to please, got
 courtship till she cried *Jam satis*!

Fop be-flattered, Hunks be-friended, Hag
 be-lovered —

Nobody o'erlooked, save God — he soon
 attained his end.

As he lounged at ease one morning in his
 villa,

(Hag's the dowry) estimated (Hunks' be-
 quest) his coin in coffer,

Mused on how a fool's good word (Fop's
 word) could fill a

Social circle with his praise, promote him
 man of mark, —

All at once — "An old friend fain would
 see your Highness!"

There stood Peter, skeleton and scarecrow, 64
 plain writ *Phi-lo-so-pher*

- In the woe-worn face — for yellowness
and dryness,
Parchment — with a pair of eyes — one
hope their feeble spark.
- “Did I counsel rightly? Have you, in
accordance,
Prospered greatly, dear my pupil? Sure,
at just the stage I find you,
When your hand may draw me forth
from the mad war-dance
Savages are leading round your master —
down, not dead.
Padua wants to burn me: baulk them, let
me linger
Life out — rueful though its remnant —
hid in some safe hole behind you!
Prostrate here I lie: quick, help with but a
finger
- 10 Lest I house in safety's self — a tomb-
stone o'er my head!
- “Lodging, bite and sup, with — now and
then — a copper
— Alms for any poorer still, if such there
be, — is all my asking.
Take me for your bedesman, — nay, if you
think proper,
Menial merely, — such my perfect passion
for repose!
Yes, from out your plenty Peter craves a
pittance
— Leave to thaw his frozen hands before
the fire whereat you're basking!
Double though your debt were, grant this
boon — remittance
He proclaims of obligation: 'tis himself
that owes!”
- “Venerated Master — can it be, such treat-
ment
- 20 Learning meets with, magic fails to guard
you from, by all appearance?
Strange! for, as you entered, — what the
famous feat meant,
I was full of, — why you reared that fabric,
Padua's boast.
Nowise for man's pride, man's pleasure,
did you slyly
Raise it, but man's seat of rule whereby
the world should soon have clearance.
(Happy world) from such a rout as now so
vilely
Handles you — and hampers me, for which
I grieve the most.
- “Since if it got wind you now were my
familiar,
How could I protect you — nay, defend
myself against the rabble?
Wait until the mob, now masters, willy-
nilly are
- 30 Servants as they should be: then has
gratitude full play!

Surely this experience shows how unbefit-
ting
'Tis that minds like mine should rot in ease
and plenty. Geese may gabble,
Gorge, and keep the ground: but swans
are soon for quitting
Earthly fare — as fain would I, your swan,
if taught the way.

“Teach me, then, to rule men, have them
at my pleasure!
Solely for their good, of course, — impart
a secret worth rewarding,
Since the proper life's-prize! Tantalus's
treasure
Aught beside proves, vanishes and leaves
no trace at all.
Wait awhile, nor press for payment pre-
maturely!
Over-haste defrauds you. Thanks! since, 4
— even while I speak, — discarding
Sloth and vain delights, I learn how —
swiftly, surely —
Magic sways the sceptre, wears the crown
and wields the ball!

“Gone again — what, is he? 'Faith, he's
soon disposed of!
Peter's precepts work already, put within
my lump their leaven!
Ay, we needs must don glove would we
pluck the rose — doff
Silken garment would we climb the tree
and take its fruit.
Why sharp thorn, rough rind? To keep
unviolated
Either prize! We garland us, we mount
from earth to feast in heaven,
Just because exist what once we estimated
Hindrances which, better taught, as helps 5
we now compute.

“Foolishly I turned disgusted from my
fellows!
Pits of ignorance — to fill, and heaps of
prejudice — to level —
Multitudes in motley, whites and blacks
and yellows —
What a hopeless task it seemed to discipline
the host!
Now I see my error. Vices act like vir-
tues
— Not alone because they guard — sharp
thorns — the rose we first dishevel,
Not because they scrape, scratch — rough
rind — through the dirt-shoes
Bare feet cling to bole with, while the half-
moon boot we boast.

“No, my aim is nobler, more disinterested!
Man shall keep what seemed to thwart him, 6
since it proves his true assistance,
Leads to ascertaining which head is the best
head,

Would he crown his body, rule its members
— lawless else.

Ignorant the horse stares, by deficient
vision

Takes a man to be a monster, lets him
mount, then, twice the distance

Horse could trot unriden, gallops —
dream Elysian! —

Dreaming that his dwarfish guide's a giant,
— jockeys tell 's."

Brief, so worked the spell, he promptly
had a riddance:

Heart and brain no longer felt the pricks
which passed for conscience-scruples:

Free henceforth his feet, — *Per Bacco*, how
they did dance

Merrily through lets and checks that
stopped the way before!

Politics the prize now, — such adroit ad-
viser,

Opportune suggester, with the tact that
triples and quadruples

Merit in each measure, — never did the
Kaiser

Boast a subject such a statesman, friend,
and something more!

As he, up and down, one noonday, paced
his closet

— Council o'er, each spark (his hint)
blown flame, by colleagues' breath
applauded,

Strokes of statecraft hailed with "*Salomo
si nõsset!*"

(His the nostrum) — every throw for luck
come double-six, —

As he, pacing, hugged himself in satisfac-
tion,

Thump — the door went. "What, the
Kaiser? By none else were I defrauded

Thus of well-earned solace. Since 'tis
fate's exaction, —

Enter, Liege my Lord! Ha, Peter, you
here? *Teneor vix!*"

"Ah, Sir, none the less, contain you, nor
wax irate!

You so lofty, I so lowly, — vast the space
which yawns between us!

Still, methinks, you — more than ever —
at a high rate

Needs must prize poor Peter's secret since
it lifts you thus.

Grant me now the boon whereat before you
boggled!

Ten long years your march has moved —
one triumph — (though e's short) —
hactenus,

While I down and down disastrously have
joggled

• Till I pitch against Death's door, the true
Nec Ultra Plus.

"Years ago — some ten 'tis — since I
sought for shelter,

Craved in your whole house a closet, out
of all your means a comfort.

Now you soar above these: as is gold to
spelter

So is power — you urged with reason —
paramount to wealth.

Power you boast in plenty: let it grant me
refuge!

Houseroom now is out of question: find
for me some stronghold — some
fort —

Privacy wherein, immured, shall this blind
deaf huge

Monster of a mob let stay the soul I'd save
by stealth!

"Ay, for all too much with magic have I
tampered!

— Lost the world, and gained, I fear, a 40
certain place I'm to describe loth!

Still, if prayer and fasting tame the pride
long pampered,

Mercy may be mine: amendment never
comes too late.

How can I amend beset by cursers,
kickers?

Pluck this brand from out the burning!
Once away, I take my Bible-oath,

Never more — so long as life's weak
lamp-flame flickers —

No, not once I'll tease you, but in silence
bear my fate!"

"Gently, good my Genius, Oracle unerr-
ing!

Strange now! can you guess on what — as
in you peeped — it was I pondered?

You and I are both of one mind in pre-
ferring

Power to wealth, but — here's the point — 50
what sort of power, I ask?

Ruling men is vulgar, easy and ignoble:
Rid yourself of conscience, quick you have

at beck and call the fond herd.

But who wields the crozier, down may fling
the crow-bill:

That's the power I covet now; soul's sway
o'er souls — my task!

"Well but, you object, 'you have it, who
by glamour

Dress up lies to look like truths, mask
folly in the garb of reason:

Your soul acts on theirs, sure, when the
people clamour,

Hold their peace, now fight now fondle, —
earwigged through the brains.'

Possibly! but still the operation's mun-
dane,

Grosser than a taste demands which — 4
craving manna — kecks at peason —

Power o'er men by wants material: why
should one deign
Rule by sordid hopes and fears — a grunt
for all one's pains?

"No, if men must praise me, let them
praise to purpose!

Would we move the world, not earth but
heaven must be our fulcrum — *pou
sto!*

Thus I seek to move it: Master, why
interpose —

Baulk my climbing close on what's the
ladder's topmost round?

Statecraft 'tis I step from: when by
priestcraft hoisted

Up to where my foot may touch the highest
rung which fate allows toe,

Then indeed ask favour! On you shall
be foisted

10 No excuse: I'll pay my debt, each penny
of the pound!

"Ho, my knaves without there! Lead this
worthy downstairs!

No farewell, good Paul — nay, Peter —
what's your name remembered
rightly?

Come, he's humble: out another would
have flounced — airs

Suitors often give themselves when our
sort bow them forth.

Did I touch his rags? He surely kept
his distance:

Yet, there somehow passed to me from
him — where'er the virtue might lie —

Something that inspires my soul — Oh, by
assistance

Doubtlessly of Peter! — still, he's worth
just what he's worth!

"'Tis my own soul soars now: soaring —
how? By crawling!

20 I'll to Rome, before Rome's feet the tem-
poral-supreme lay prostrate!

'Hands' (I'll say) 'proficient once in pull-
ing, hauling

This and that way men as I was minded —
feet now clasp!

Ay, the Kaiser's self has wrung them in his
fervour!

Now — they only sue to slave for Rome,
nor at one doit the cost rate.

Rome's adopted child — no bone, no
muscle, nerve or

Sinew of me but I'll strain, though out my
life I gasp!"

As he stood one evening proudly — (he
had traversed

Rome on horseback — peerless pageant!
— claimed the Lateran as new
Pope) —

Thinking "All's attained now! Pontiff!
Who could have erst

Dreamed of my advance so far when, some 30
ten years ago,

I embraced devotion, grew from priest to
bishop,

Gained the Purple, bribed the Conclave,
got the Two-thirds, saw my coop ope,

Came out — what Rome hails me! O
were there a wish-shop,

Not one wish more would I purchase —
lord of all below!

"Ha! — who dares intrude now — puts
aside the arras?

What, old Peter, here again, at such a
time, in such a presence?

Satan sends this plague back merely to
embarrass

Me who enter on my office — little needing
you!

'Faith, I'm touched myself by age, but you
look Tithon!

Were it vain to seek of you the sole prize 40
left — rejuvenescence?

Well, since flesh is grass which Time must
lay his scythe on,

Say your say and so depart and make no
more ado!"

Peter faltered — coughing first by way of
prologue —

"Holiness, your help comes late: a death
at ninety little matters.

Padua, build poor Peter's pyre now, on log
roll log,

Burn away — I've lived my day! Yet
here's the sting in death —

I've an author's pride: I want my Book's
survival:

See, I've hid it in my breast to warm me
mid the rags and tatters!

Save it — tell next age your Master had no
rival!

Scholar's debt discharged in full! be 50
'Thanks' my latest breath!"

"Faugh, the frowsy bundle — scribblings
harum-scarum

Scattered o'er a dozen sheepskins! What's
the name of this farrago?

Ha — '*Conciliator Differentiarum*' —

Man and book may burn together, cause
the world no loss!

Stop — what else? A tractate — eh, '*De
Speciebus*

Ceremonialis Ma-gi-æ?' I dream sure!
Hence, away, go,

Wizard, — quick avoid me! Vain you
clasp my knee, buss

Hand that bears the Fisher's ring or foot
that boasts the Cross!

"Help! The old magician clings like an octopus!

Ah, you rise now — fuming, fretting, frowning, if I read your features!

Frown, who cares? We're Pope — once Pope, you can't unpope us!

Good — you muster up a smile: that's better! Still so brisk?

All at once grown youthful? But the case is plain! Ass —

Here I dally with the fiend, yet know the Word — compels all creatures

Earthly, heavenly, hellish. *Apage, Sathanas*

Dicam verbum Salomonis — " — *dicite?*" When — whisk! —

What was changed? The stranger gave his eyes a rubbing:

There smiled Peter's face turned back a moment at him o'er the shoulder,

As the black door shut, bang! "So he 'scapes a drubbing!"

(Quoth a boy who, unespied, had stopped to hear the talk).

"That's the way to thank these wizards when they bid men

Benedicite! What ails you? You, a man, and yet no bolder?

Foreign Sir, you look but foolish!" "*Idmen, idmen!*"

Groaned the Greek. "O Peter, cheese at last I know from chalk!"

Peter lived his life out, menaced yet no martyr,

Knew himself the mighty man he was — such knowledge all his guerdon,

Left the world a big book — people but in part err

When they style a true *Scientiæ Compendium*:

"*Admirationem incutit*" they sourly Smile, as fast they shut the folio which

myself was somehow spurred on

Once to ope: but love — life's milk which daily, hourly,

Blockheads lap — O Peter, still thy taste of love's to come!

Greck, was your ambition likewise doomed to failure?

True, I find no record you wore purple, walked with axe and fasces,

Played some antipope's part: still, friend, don't turn tail, you're

Certain, with but these two gifts, to gain earth's prize in time!

Cleverness uncurbed by conscience — if you ransacked

o Peter's book you'd find no potent speli like these to rule the masses;

Nor should want example, had I not to transact

Other business. Go your ways, you'll thrive! So ends my rhyme.

When these parts Tiberius, — not yet Caesar, — travelled,

Passing Padua, he consulted Padua's Oracle of Geryon

(God three-headed, thrice wise) just to get unravelled

Certain tangles of his future. "Fling at Abano

Golden dice," it answered: "dropt within the fount there,

Note what sum the pips present!" And still we see each die, the very one,

Turn up, through the crystal, — read the whole account there

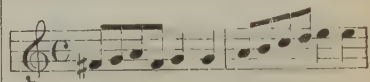
Where 'tis told by Suetonius, — each its 40 highest throw.

Scarce the sportive fancy-dice I fling show "Venus:"

Still — for love of that dear land which I so oft in dreams revisit —

I have — oh, not sung! but lilted (as — between us —

Grows my lazy custom) this its legend. What the lilt?



DOCTOR —

A RABBI told me: On the day allowed Satan for carping at God's rule, he came, Fresh from our earth, to brave the angel-crowd.

"What is the fault now?" "This I find to blame:

Many and various are the tongues below,
Yet all agree in one speech, all proclaim

"Hell has no might to match what earth can show:

Death is the strongest-born of Hell, and yet

Stronger than Death is a Bad Wife, we know."

"Is it a wonder if I fume and fret —

Robbed of my rights, since Death am I, and mine

The style of Strongest? Men pay Nature's debt

10 "Because they must at my demand; decline

To pay it henceforth surely men will please,

Provided husbands with bad wives combine

"To baffle Death. Judge between me and these!"

"Thyself shalt judge. Descend to earth in shape

Of mortal, marry, drain from froth to lees

"The bitter draught, then see if thou escape

Concluding, with men sorrowful and sage,
A Bad Wife's strength Death's self in vain would ape!"

How Satan entered on his pilgrimage,
20 Conformed himself to earthly ordinance,
Wived and played husband well from youth to age

Intrepidly — I leave untold, advance
Through many a married year until I reach

A day when — of his father's countenance

The very image, like him too in speech
As well as thought and deed, — the union's fruit

Attained maturity. "I needs must teach

"My son a trade: but trade, such son to suit,

Needs seeking after. He a man of war?

30 Too cowardly! A lawyer wins repute —

"Having to toil and moil, though — both which are

Beyond this sluggard. There's Divinity:
No, that's my own bread-winner — that be far

"From my poor offspring! Physic? Ha, we'll try

If this be practicable. Where's my wit? Asleep? — since, now I come to think . . .

Ay, ay!

"Hither, my son! Exactly have I hit
On a profession for thee. *Medicus* — Behold, thou art appointed! Yea, I spit

"Upon thine eyes, bestow a virtue thus
That henceforth not this human form I wear

Shalt thou perceive alone, but — one of us

"By privilege — thy fleshly sight shall bear
Me in my spirit-person as I walk

The world and take my prey appointed there.

"Doctor once dubbed — what ignorance shall baulk

Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout

Ascholic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk —

"No matter! All's one: cure shall come about

And win thee wealth — fees paid with such a roar

Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout

"As never stunned man's ears on earth before.

"How may this be?" Why, that's my sceptic! Soon

Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt'st no more!

"Why is it I bestow on thee the boon
Of recognising me the while I go
Invisibly among men, morning, noon

"And night, from house to house, and — quick or slow —

Take my appointed prey? They summon thee

For help, suppose: obey the summons! so!

"Enter, look round! Where's Death? Know — I am he,

Satan who work all evil: I who bring
Pain to the patient in whate'er degree.

"I, then, am there: first glance thine eye shall fling

Will find me — whether distant or at hand,

As I am free to do my spiriting.

"At such mere first glance thou shalt understand

Wherefore I reach no higher up the room
Than door or window, when my form is scanned.

"Howe'er friends' faces please to gather
gloom,
Bent o'er the sick, — howe'er himself de-
sponds, —
In such case Death is not the sufferer's
doom.

"Contrariwise, do friends rejoice my bonds
Are broken, does the captive in his turn
Crow 'Life shall conquer'? Nip these
foolish fronds

"Of hope a-sprout, if haply thou discern
Me at the head — my victim's head, be
sure!
Forth now! This taught thee, little else
to learn!"

ro And forth he went. Folk heard him ask
demure

"How do you style this ailment? (There
he peeps,
My father, through the arras!) Sirs, the
cure

"Is plain as A. B. C.! Experience steeps
Blossoms of pennyroyal half an hour
In sherris. *Sumat!* — Lo, how sound he
sleeps —

"The subject you presumed was past the
power
Of Galen to relieve!" Or else "How's
this?
Why call for help so tardily? Clouds lour

"Portentously indeed, Sirs! (Nought's
amiss:
20 He's at the bed-foot merely.) Still, the
storm
May pass averted — not by quacks, I wis

"Like you, my masters! You, forsooth,
perform
A miracle? Stand, sciolists, aside!
Blood, ne'er so cold, at ignorance grows
warm!"

Which boasting by result was justified,
Big as might words be: whether drugged
or left
Drugless, the patient always lived, not
died.

Great the heir's gratitude, so nigh bereft
Of all he prized in this world: sweet the
smile

30 Of disconcerted rivals: "Cure? — say,
theft

"From Nature in despite of Art — so
style

This off hand kill-or-cure work! You did
much,
I had done more: folk cannot wait
awhile!"

But did the case change? was it —
"Scarcely such

The symptoms as to warrant our recourse
To your skill, Doctor! Yet since just a
touch

"Of pulse, a taste of breath, has all the
force

With you of long investigation claimed
By others, — tracks an ailment to its
source

"Intuitively, — may we ask unblamed 40
What from this pimple you prognosticate?"
"Death!" was the answer, as he saw and
named

The coucher by the sick man's head.
"Too late

You send for my assistance. I am bold
Only by Nature's leave, and bow to Fate!

"Besides, you have my rivals: lavish gold!
How comfortably quick shall life depart
Cosseted by attentions manifold!

"One day, one hour ago, perchance my art
Had done some service. Since you have 50
yourselves
Chosen — before the horse — to put the
cart,

"Why, Sirs, the sooner that the sexton
delves
Your patient's grave, the better! How
you stare
— Shallow, for all the deep books on your
shelves!

"Fare you well, fumlbers!" Do I need
declare
What name and fame, what riches recom-
pensed
The Doctor's practice? Never anywhere

Such an adept as daily evidenced
Each new vaticination! Oh, not he
Like dolts who dallied with their scruples, 60
fenced

With subterfuge, nor gave out frank and
free
Something decisive! If he said "I save
The patient," saved he was: if "Death
will be

"His portion," you might count him dead.
Thus brave,
Behold our worthy, sans competitor
Throughout the country, on the architrave

Of Glory's temple golden-lettered for
Machaon *redivivus*! So, it fell
That, of a sudden, when the Emperor

Was smit by sore disease, I need not tell
If any other Doctor's aid was sought
To come and forthwith make the sick
Prince well.

"He will reward thee as a monarch ought.
Not much imports the malady; but then,
He clings to life and cries like one dis-
traught

20 "For thee — who, from a simple citizen,
Mayst look to rise in rank, — nay, haply
wear
A medal with his portrait, — always when

"Récovery is quite accomplished. There!
Pass to the presence!" Hardly has he
crossed
The chamber's threshold when he halts,
aware

Of who stands sentry by the head. All's
lost.

"Sire, nought avails my art: you near the
goal,
And end the race by giving up the ghost."

"How?" cried the monarch: "Names
upon your roll

20 Of half my subjects rescued by your skill —
Old and young, rich and poor — crowd
cheek by jowl

"And yet no room for mine? Be saved I
will!

Why else am I earth's foremost potentate?
Add me to these and take as fee your fill

"Of gold — that point admits of no debate
Between us: save me, as you can and
must, —

Gold, till your gown's pouch cracks be-
neath the weight!"

This touched the Doctor. "Truly a
home-thrust,

30 Parent, you will not parry! Have I dared
Entreat that you forego the meal of dust

"— Man that is snake's meat — when I
saw prepared

Your daily portion? Never! Just this
once,

Go from his head, then, — let his life be
spared!"

Whisper met whisper in the gruff response
"Fool, I must have my prey: no inch I
budge

From where thou see'st me thus myself
ensconce."

"Ah," moaned the sufferer, "by thy look
I judge
Wealth fails to tempt thee: what if hon-
ours prove
More efficacious? Nought to him I
grudge

"Who saves me. Only keep my head
above
The cloud that's creeping round it — I'll
divide
My empire with thee! No? What's
left but — love?

"Does love allure thee? Well then, take
as bride
My only daughter, fair beyond belief!
Save me — to-morrow shall the knot be
tied!"

"Father, you hear him! Respite ne'er
so brief
Is all I beg: go now and come again
Next day, for aught I care: respect the
grief

"Mine will be if thy first-born sues in
vain!"

"Fool, I must have my prey!" was all he
got

In answer. But a fancy crossed his brain

"I have it! Sire, methinks a meteor shod
Just now across the heavens and neu-
tralised
Jove's salutary influence: 'neath the blot

"Plumb are you placed now: well that I
surmised

The cause of failure! Knaves, reverse the
bed!"

"Stay!" groaned the monarch, "I shall
be capsized —

"Jolt — jolt — my heels uplift where late
my head

Was lying — sure I'm turned right round
at last!

What do you say now, Doctor?" Nought
he said:

For why? With one brisk leap the Antic
passed

From couch-foot back to pillow, — as
before,

Lord of the situation. Long aghast

The Doctor gazed, then "Yet one trial
more

Is left me" inwardly he uttered. "Shame
Upon thy flinty heart! Do I implore

"This trifling favour in the idle name
Of mercy to the moribund? I plead
The cause of all thou dost affect: my aim

"Befits my author! Why would I succeed?
Simply that by success I may promote
The growth of thy pet virtues — pride and greed.

"But keep thy favours! — curse thee! I devote
Henceforth my service to the other side.
No time to lose: the rattle's in his throat.

"So, — not to leave one last resource untried, —
Run to my house with all haste, somebody!
Bring me that knobstick thence, so often plied

10 "With profit by the astrologer — shall I
Disdain its help, the mystic Jacob's-Staff?
Sire, do but have the courage not to die

"Till this arrive! Let none of you dare laugh!
Though rugged its exterior, I have seen
That implement work wonders, send the chaff

"Quick and thick flying from the wheat — I mean,
By metaphor, a human sheaf it thrashed
Flail-like. Go fetch it! Or — a word between

"Just you and me, friend! — go bid, unabashed,
20 My mother, whom you'll find there, bring
the stick
Herself — herself, mind!" Out the lackey
dashed

Zealous upon the errand. Craft and trick
Are meat and drink to Satan: and he
grinned
— How else? — at an excuse so politic

For failure: scarce would Jacob's-Staff
rescind
Fate's firm decree! And ever as he neared
The agonising one, his breath like wind

Froze to the marrow, while his eye-flash
scared
Sense in the brain up: closelier and more
close

30 Pressing his prey, when at the door appeared

— Who but his Wife the Bad? Whereof
one dose,
One grain, one mite of the medicament,
Sufficed him. Up he sprang. One word,
too gross

To soil my lips with, — and through ceiling
went
Somehow the Husband. "That a storm's
dispersed
We know for certain by the sulphury scent!

"Hail to the Doctor! Who but one so
versed
In all Dame Nature's secrets had pre-
scribed
The staff thus opportunely? Style him
first

"And foremost of physicians!" "I've
imbibed
Elixir surely," smiled the prince, —
"have gained
New lease of life. Dear Doctor, how you
bribed

"Death to forego me, boots not: you've
obtained
My daughter and her dowry. Death, I've
heard,
Was still on earth the strongest power that
reigned,

"Except a Bad Wife!" Whereunto de-
murred
Nowise the Doctor, so refused the fee
— No dowry, no bad wife!

"You think absurd
This tale?" — the Rabbi added: "True,
our Talmud
Boasts sundry such: yet — have our 50
elders erred
In thinking there's some water there, not
all mud?"
I tell it, as the Rabbi told it me.

PAN AND LUNA.

Si credere dignum est. — *Georgic.* iii. 390.

O WORTHY of belief I hold it was,
Virgil, your legend in those strange three
lines!
No question, that adventure came to pass
One black night in Arcadia: yes, the pines,
Mountains and valleys mingling made
one mass
Of black with void black heaven: the
earth's confines,
The sky's embrace, — below, above,
around,
All hardened into black without a bound. 60
Fill up a swart stone chalice to the brim
With fresh-squeezed yet fast-thickening
poppy-juice:
See how the sluggish jelly, late a-swim,

- Turns marble to the touch of who would loose
The solid smooth, grown jet from rim to rim,
By turning round the bowl! So night can fuse
Earth with her all-comprising sky. No less,
Light, the least spark, shows air and emptiness.
- And thus it proved when — diving into space,
Stript of all vapour, from each web of mist
Utterly film-free — entered on her race
The naked Moon, full-orbed antagonist
10 Of night and dark, night's dowry: peak to base,
Upstart mountains, and each valley, kissed
To sudden life, lay silver-bright: in air
Flew she revealed, Maid-Moon with limbs all bare.
- Still as she fled, each depth — where refuge seemed —
Opening a lone pale chamber, left distinct
Those limbs: mid still-retreating blue, she teemed
Herself with whiteness, — virginal, uncinct
By any halo save what finely gleamed
To outline not disguise her: heaven was linked
20 In one accord with earth to quaff the joy,
Drain beauty to the dregs without alloy.
- Whereof she grew aware. What help?
When, lo,
A succourable cloud with sleep lay dense:
Some pine-tree-top had caught it sailing slow,
And tethered for a prize: in evidence
Captive lay fleece on fleece of piled-up snow
Drowsily patient: flake-heaped how or whence,
The structure of that succourable cloud,
What matter? Shamed she plunged into its shroud.
- 30 Orbed — so the woman-figure poets call
Because of rounds on rounds — that apple-shaped
Head which its hair binds close into a ball
Each side the curving ears — that pure undraped
Pout of the sister paps — that . . . Once for all,
Say — her consummate circle thus escaped
With its innumerable circlets, sank absorbed,
Safe in the cloud — O naked Moon full-orbed!
- But what means this? The downy swathes combine,
Conglobe, the smothery coy-caressing stuff
Curdles about her! Vain each twist and twine
Those lithe limbs try, encroached on by a fluff
Fitting as close as fits the dented spine
Its flexile ivory outside-flesh: enough!
The plummy drifts contract, condense, constringe,
Till she is swallowed by the feathery springe.
- As when a pearl slips lost in the thin foam
Churned on a sea-shore, and, o'er-frothed, conceits
Herself safe-housed in Amphitrite's dome, —
If, through the bladdery wave-worked yeast, she meets
What most she loathes and leaps from, — 50 elf from gnome
No gladlier, — finds that safest of retreats
Bubble about a treacherous hand wide open
To grasp her — (divers who pick pearls so grieve) —
- So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract:
He it was schemed the snare thus subtly wrought
With simulated earth-breath, — wool-tufts packed
Into a billowy wrappage. Sheep far-sought
For spotless shearings yield such: take the fact
As learned Virgil gives it, — how the 60 breed
Whitens itself for ever: yes, indeed!
- If one forefather ram, though pure as chalk
From tinge on fleece, should still display a tongue
Black 'neath the beast's moist palate, prompt men baulk
The propagating plague: he gets no young:
They rather slay him, — sell his hide to caulk
Ships with, first steeped in pitch, — nor hands are wrung
In sorrow for his fate: protected thus,
The purity we love is gained for us.
- So did Girl-moon, by just her attribute 70
Of unmatched modesty betrayed, lie trapped,
Bruised to the breast of Pan, half-god half-brute,
Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped

— Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
 Love's language — which moreover proves unapt
 To tell how she recoiled — as who finds thorns
 Where she sought flowers — when, feeling, she touched — horns!

Then — does the legend say? — first moon-eclipse
 Happened, first swooning-fit which puzzled sore
 The early sages? Is that why she dips Into the dark, a minute and no more,
 Only so long as serves her while she rips
 The cloud's womb through and, faultless as before,
 Pursues her way? No lesson for a maid
 Left she, a maid herself thus trapped, betrayed?

Ha, Virgil? Tell the rest, you! "To the deep
 Of his domain the wildwood, Pan forth-with
 Called her, and so she followed" — in her sleep,
 Surely? — "by no means spurning him."
 The myth

Explain who may! Let all else go, I keep
 — As of a ruin just a monolith —
 Thus much, one verse of five words, each a boon:
 Arcadia, night, a cloud, Pan, and the 20 moon.

"TOUCH him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke:
 Soil so quick-receptive, — not one feather-seed,
 Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
 Vitalising virtue: song would song succeed
 Sudden as spontaneous — prove a poet-soul!"

Indeed?

Rock's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare:
 Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
 Vainly both expend, — few flowers awaken there:
 Quiet in its cleft broods — what the after age
 Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage. 30

JOCOSERIA.

1883.

WANTING is — what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
— Where is the blot?

Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
— Framework which waits for a picture to frame:

What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!

Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,

10 Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!

Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

DONALD.

“WILL you hear my story also,
— Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?”

The boys were a band from Oxford,
The oldest of whom was twenty.

20 The bothy we held carouse in
Was bright with fire and candle;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses — turf-smoke:
In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence “Boiling, boiling,” the kettle sang,
“And ready for fresh Glenlivet.”

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance:
Truth, though, — the lads were loyal:

30 “Grouse, five score brace to the bag!
Deer, ten hours’ talk of the Royal!”

Of boasting, not one bit, boys!
Only there seemed to settle
Somehow above your curly heads,
— Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
As each new-puffed Havanna
Rewarded the teller’s well-told tale, —
This vaunt “To Sport — Hosanna!

“Hunt, fish, shoot,
Would a man fulfil life’s duty!
Not to the bodily frame alone
Does Sport give strength and beauty,

“But character gains in — courage!
Ay, Sir, and much beside it!
You don’t sport, more’s the pity:
You soon would find, if you tried it,

“Good sportsman means good fellow,
Sound-hearted he, to the centre;
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
— There’s where the rot can enter!

“There’s where the dirt will breed,
The shabbiness Sport would banish!
Oh no, Sir, no! In your honoured case
All such objections vanish.

“’Tis known how hard you studied:
A Double-First — what, the jigger!
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
I’ll never again touch trigger!

“Still, tastes are tastes, allow me!
Allow, too, where there’s keenness
For Sport, there’s little likelihood
Of a man’s displaying meanness!”

So, put on my mettle, I interposed.
“Will you hear my story?” quoth I.
“Never mind how long since it happened,
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy;

“With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level:
(One’s a Bishop, one’s gone to the Bench, 7
And one’s gone — well, to the Devil.)

“When, lo, a scratching and tapping!
Iri hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
— No need of our playing inquisitor!”

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount . . . Ben . . . but the name
scarce matters:
Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognise Ben by description; 8
Behind him — a moor’s immenseness:

Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind!
For an edge there is, though narrow;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben — with an end in *ich* —
Why planted there, is a riddle:

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
Till it seems — to the beholder

From down in the gully — as if Ben's
breast
To a sudden spike diminished,
Would signify to the boldest foot
"All further passage finished!"

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
And on to the very bending,
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
Having trod, he, there arriving,
Finds — what he took for a point was
breadth,
A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 'tis reached
proves straight,
From one side gains the other:
The wee path widens — resume the march,
And he foils you, Ben my brother!

But Donald — (that name, I hope, will
do) —
I wrong him if I call "foiling"
The tramp of the callant, whistling the
while
As blithe as our kettle's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood
up,
And now, — when perchance was wait-
ing
A lass at the brig below, — 'twixt mount
And moor would he stand debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle;
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow;
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow. 5a

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he
stood,
When — whom found he full-facing?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger,
And gained the height where — who could
guess
He would meet with a rival ranger?

'Twas a gold-red stag that stood and
stared,
Gigantic and magnific, 6a
By the wonder — ay, and the peril —
struck
Intelligent and pacific:

For a red deer is no fallow deer
Grown cowardly through park-feeding;
He batters you like a thunderbolt
If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
Had valour advised discretion:
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a
rope
No Blondin makes profession. 7a

Yet Donald must turn, would pride per-
mit,
Though pride ill brooks retiring:
Each eyed each — mute man, motionless
beast —
Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new
sense,
To meet some need as novel,
Springs up in the brain: it inspired re-
source:
—"Nor advance nor retreat but —
grovel!"

And slowly, surely, never a whit
Relaxing the steady tension 8a
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast, —
By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down:
Till flat, breast upwards, lying
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
—"If he cross me! The trick's worth
trying."

Minutes were an eternity;
But a new sense was created

In the stag's brain too; he resolves!
 Slow, sure,
 With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
 Which tastes the way ere it touches
 Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
 Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
 Lands itself no less finely:
 So a mother removes a fly from the face
 10 Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 'tis the haunch and hind foot's
 turn
 — That's hard: can the beast quite
 raise it?
 Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
 His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
 Was sportsman first, man after:
 A fancy lightened his caution through,
 — He well-nigh broke into laughter.

"It were nothing short of a miracle!
 20 Unrivalled, unexampled —
 All sporting feats with this feat matched
 Were down and dead and trampled!"

The last of the legs as tenderly
 Follows the rest: or never
 Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
 And his right-hand loose — how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
 While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
 A rise on the elbow, and — now's the
 time
 30 Or never: this turn's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
 Who scanned — for He does — each
 feature
 Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
 By the agonising creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: "Thy gift brings
 this!"
 Up he sprang, back he staggered,
 Over he fell, and with him our friend
 — At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next
 day
 40 From the gully's depth the wreck of
 him;
 His fall had been stayed by the stag be-
 neath
 Who cushioned and saved the neck of
 him.

But the rest of his body — why, doctors said,
 Whatever could break was broken;
 Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a
 toast

In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

"That your life is left you, thank the
 stag!"

Said they when — the slow cure
 ended —

They opened the hospital door, and thence
 — Strapped, spliced, main fractures
 mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone, —
 Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
 Out — what went in a Goliath well-
 nigh, —
 Some half of a David hobbled.

"You must ask an alms from house to
 house:

Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
 With its grand twelve tines¹ — I'd buy it
 myself —
 And use the skin for a jacket!"

He was wiser, made both head and hide
 His win-penny: hands and knees on,
 Would manage to crawl — poor crab —
 by the roads
 In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
 Why, harvest was sure: folk listened.
 He told his tale to the lovers of Sport:
 Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes
 glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and
 spread

His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
 With "Gentlemen, here's the skull of the
 stag

I was over, thank God, not under!" —

The company broke out in applause;
 "By Jingo, a lucky cripple!
 Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of
 bread,
 And a tug, besides, at our tippie!"

And "There's my pay for your pluck!"
 cried This.

"And mine for your jolly story!"
 Cried That, while T'other — but he was
 drunk —

Hiccapped "A trump, a Tory!"

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest;
 For, as Homer would say, "within grate 8
 Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul
 growled

"Rightly rewarded, — Ingrate!"

¹ The branches of a stag's horn.

SOLOMON AND BALKIS.

SOLOMON King of the Jews and the Queen of Sheba Balkis

Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may conjecture their talk is

Solely of things sublime: why else has she sought Mount Zion,

Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion and lion?

She proves him with hard questions: before she has reached the middle

He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them riddle by riddle;

Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit in her,

And thus would she close the game whereof she was first beginner:

"O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and well-nigh monster,

One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo* conster!

Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of perfect wisdom

Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron* do — that's his dome?"

The King makes tart reply: "Whom else but the wise his equals

Should he welcome with heart and voice? — since, king though he be, such weak walls

Of circumstance — power and pomp — divide souls each from other

That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must acknowledge my brother.

"Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come builder — whate'er his condition,

Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My insight has pierced the partition

And hails — for the poem, the picture, the statue, the building — my fellow!

Gold's gold though dim in the dust: court-polish soon turns it yellow.

"But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling sex superior,

That for knowledge has travelled so far yet seemest no whit the wearier, —

Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like thyself, consummate

In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable 'Up hither, come, mate!'"

"The Good are my mates — how else? Why doubt it?" the Queen up-bridled:

"Sure even above the Wise, — or in travel my eyes have idled, —

I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor, shrewd or simple, If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop my wimple!"

And in that bashful jerk of her body, she — peace, thou scoffer! —

Jostled the King's right-hand stretched 30 courteously help to proffer,

And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed

The Ring which bore the Name — turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name! — and at once "I greet the Wise — Oh,

Certainly welcome such to my court — with this proviso:

The building must be my temple, my person stand forth the statue,

The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise — you cat, you!"

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! "Be truthful in turn!" so bade he:

"See the Name, obey its hest!" And at once subjoins the lady

—"Provided the Good are the young, men strong and tall and proper,

Such servants I straightway enlist, — 40 which means . . ." but the blushes stop her.

"Ah, Soul," the Monarch sighed, "that wouldst soar yet ever crawlst,

How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose the smallest,

Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expansion,

While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly mansion?

"Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,

With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!

On Lebanon roots the cedar — soil lofty, yet stony and sandy —

While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall grows low but handy.

"Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body and sense beneath her;

Below she must condescend to plodding 50 unbuoyed by aether.

In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else inanity;

On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools — that's Vanity.

"It is nought, it will go, it can never presume above to trouble me;

But here, — why, it toys and tickles and teases, how'er I redouble me

In a doggedest of endeavours to play the indifferent. Therefore,
Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast travelled thus far: but wherefore?

"Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth styles Sagest?"

Through her blushes laughed the Queen.
"For the sake of a Sage? The gay jest!

On high, be communion with Mind — there, Body concerns not Balkis:

Down here, — do I make too bold? Sage Solomon, — one fool's small kiss!"

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI.

[This is a well-known story. Cristina was the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, and succeeded to the throne of Sweden on his death in 1632. She was an ill-regulated woman of free life, of whom many curious tales are told. She abdicated in 1654 and became a Roman Catholic. Monaldeschi was an Italian reprobate, who became her Master of the Horse. She fell in love with him, and he made a fool of her. Discovering the truth, Cristina had him barbarously murdered at Fontainebleau. She then retired to Rome, where she died in 1689.]

Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis!

Here's the gallery they trod

Both together, he her god,

10 She his idol, — lend your rod,

Chamberlain! — ay, there they are —

"*Quis*

Separabit?" — plain those two

Touching words come into view,

Apposite for me and you:

Since they witness to incessant

Love like ours: King Francis, he —

Diane the adored one, she —

Prototypes of you and me.

Everywhere is carved her Crescent

20 With his Salamander-sign —

Flame-fed creature: flame benign

To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,

— So, be warned, Sir! Where's my head?

How it wanders! What I said

Merely meant — the creature, fed

Thus on flame, was scarce injurious

Save to fools who woke its ire,

Thinking fit to play with fire.

30 'Tis the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I'll be Francis.

Crescents change, — true! — wax and wane,

Woman-like: male hearts retain
Heat nor, once warm, cool again.
So, we figure — such our chance is —
I as man and you as . . . What?
Take offence? My Love forgot
He plays woman, I do not?

I — the woman? See my habit,
Ask my people! Anyhow,
Be we what we may, one vow
Binds us, male or female. Now, —
Stand, Sir! Read! "*Quis separabit?*"
Half a mile of pictured way
Past these palace-walls to-day
Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me;
First I hated, then, at best,
— Have it so! — I acquiesced;
Pure compassion did the rest.
From below thus raised above me,
Would you, step by step, descend,
Pity me, become my friend,
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That's the ladder's round you rose by!
That — my own foot kicked away,
Having raised you: let it stay,
Serve you for retreating? Nay.
Close to me you climbed: as close by,
Keep your station, though the peak
Reached proves somewhat bare and
bleak!
Woman's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me for ever!
Love's look, gesture, speech, I claim;
Act love, lie love, all the same —
Play as earnest were our game!
Lonely I stood long: 'twas clever
When you climbed, before men's eyes,
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
Gained my peak and grasped your prize.

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder;
Here you tire of standing? Kneel!
Cure what giddiness you feel,
This way! Do your senses reel?
Not unlikely! What rolls under?
Yawning death in yon abyss
Where the waters whirl and hiss
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither . . .
But be sage! No watery grave
Needs await you: seeming brave
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave!
You surmised, when you climbed hither,
Just as easy were retreat
Should you tire, conceive unmeet
Longer patience at my feet?

Me as standing, you as stooping, —
Who arranged for each the pose?

Lest men think us friends turned foes,
Keep the attitude you chose!
Men are used to this same grouping —
I and you like statues seen.
You and I, no third between,
Kneel and stand! That makes the scene.

Mar it — and one buffet . . . Pardon!
Needless warmth — wise words in
waste!

'Twas prostration that replaced
Kneeling, then? A proof of taste.
Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
Prostrate love — become no waif,
No estray to waves that chafe
Disappointed — love's so safe!

Waves that chafe? The idlest fancy!
Peaks that scare? I think we know
Walls enclose our sculpture: so
Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.
Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
Laugh with me at waves and peak!
Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
Primæve speaks plainly! Pooh —
Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
I've lost head for who is who —
'Tis it swims and wanders! Fie on
What still proves me female! Here,
By the staircase! — for we near
That dark "Gallery of the Deer."

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
Are you faithful now as erst
On that eve when we two first
Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
Forward! Must my hand compel
Entrance — this way? Exit — well,
Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the self-same place in
Rustic Avon, at the door
Of the village church once more,
Where a tombstone paves the floor
By that holy-water basin
You appealed to — "As, below,
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
I your secrets hide?" What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess
him!

I have judged the culprit there:
Execute my sentence! Care
For no mail such cowards wear!
Dóre, Priest? Then, absolve and bless
him!

Now — you three, stab thick and fast,
Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
Thanks, friends — Father, thanks!
Aghast?

What one word of his confession
Would you tell me, though I lured
With that royal crown abjured
Just because its bars immured
Love too much? Love burst compression,
Fled free, finally confessed
All its secrets to that breast
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

69

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI.

[Mary Wollstonecraft, the famous author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," and the mother of the second Mrs. Shelley, was born in 1759. She fell in love with Fuseli, the well-known artist, who, however, with the able assistance of Mrs. Fuseli, contrived not to be won. Mary Wollstonecraft then went to Paris, and lived with Mr. Imlay, nor was it till after his desertion of her that she met and eventually married William Godwin. She was barely thirty-nine years old when she died in 1797.]

OH but is it not hard, Dear?

Mine are the nerves to quake at a
mouse:

If a spider drops I shrink with fear:

I should die outright in a haunted
house;

While for you — did the danger dared
bring help —

From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
With a serpent round me, stand stock-
still,

Go sleep in a churchyard, — so would will ?
Give me the power to dare and do
Valiantly — just for you!

Much amiss in the head, Dear,

I toil at a language, tax my brain
Attempting to draw — the scratches here!

I play, play, practise and all in vain:

But for you — if my triumph brought you
pride,

I would grapple with Greek Plays till I
died,

Paint a portrait of you — who can tell?

Work my fingers off for your "Pretty 84
well:"

Language and painting and music too,
Easily done — for you!

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,

With — more than a will — what seems
a power

To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
In flame devouring and to devour.

Such love has laboured its best and worst
To win me a lover; yet, last as first.

I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet:
Yet the strong fierce heart's love's labour's due,
Utterly lost, was — you!

ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE.

- ONE day it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, trans-
fixed,
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;
And "Mercy!" cried each — "if I tell the
truth
10 Of a passage in my youth!"
- Said This: "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of the venom left my lips,
I thought 'If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss — I
crawl
His slave, — soul, body and all!"
- Said That: "We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried;
'If Paradise-door prove 'locked?' smiled
you
20 I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
'Did one, that's away, arrive — nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!'"
- It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was
clear,
Then laughed "Confess you believed us,
Dear!"
"I saw through the joke!" the man re-
plied
They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION.

- [A king of the Lapithæ in Thessaly, who
in consequence of his murdering his wife's
father was "boycotted" by mankind.
Zeus took compassion on him and let him
into heaven, where, however, he fell in
love with Heré, and was permitted to think
he had embraced her in the form of a cloud.
Zeus banished him, and as a punishment
Ixion was tied to a perpetually revolving
wheel.]
- HIGH in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad
triumph, behold us!
30 Here the revenge of a God, there the
amends of a Man.
Whirling for ever in torment, flesh once
mortal, immortal
Made — for a purpose of hate — able
to die and revive,

Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly
for payment replenished,
Doles out — old yet young — agonies ever
afresh;
Whence the result above me: torment is
bridged by a rainbow, —
Tears, sweat, blood, — each spasm,
ghastly once, glorified now.
Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained
my place of reposing,
Off in a sparklike spray, — flesh become
vapour thro' pain, —
Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's
vaunted bodily vesture,
Made that his feats observed gain the
approval of Man, —
Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the
earth and the sky and the ocean,
Framed should pierce to the star, fitted
to pore on the plant, —
All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-
fashioned, re-fitted
Till, consummate at length, — lo, the
employment of sense!
Pain's mere minister now to the soul, once
pledged to her pleasure —
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unap-
prehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving
beguiled and betrayed her,
Made things false seem true, cheated
thro' eye and thro' ear,
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in
the lying reported, —
Spurn but the traitorous slave, utter-
most atom, away,
What should obstruct soul's rush on the
real, the only apparent?
Say I have erred, — how else? Was I
Ixion or Zeus?
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubt-
less awoken in wonder:
This proves shine, that — shade? Good
was the evil that seemed?
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture
be taught I was blind once?
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone — Tantalos,
teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure
less plainly demonstrates?
No, for the past was dream: now that
the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos
treason is folly.
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the
murderous wheel,
What is the sin which throe and throe prove
sin to the sinner!
Say the false charge was true, — thus
do I expiate, say,
Arrogant thought, word, deed, — mere
man who concited me godlike,
Sat beside Zeus, my friend — knelt be-
fore Heré, my love!

- What were the need but of pitying power
to touch and disperse it,
Film-work — eye's and ear's — all the
distraction of sense?
How should the soul not see, not hear, —
perceive and as plainly
Render, in thought, word, deed, back
again truth — not a lie?
“Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!”
Zeus, once more for a pastime,
Play the familiar, the frank! Speak
and have speech in return!
I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a
people obeyed me:
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey
it or die:
Wherefore? Because of the good to the
people, because of the honour
10 Thence accruing to me, king, the king's
law was supreme.
What of the weakling, the ignorant crim-
inal? Not who, excuseless,
Breaking my law braved death, knowing
his deed and its due —
Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor
transgressor, of purpose
No whit more than a tree, born to erect-
ness of bole,
Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty,
columnar —
Loathe if athwart, askew, — leave to the
axe and the flame!
Where is the vision may penetrate earth
and beholding acknowledge
Just one pebble at root ruined the
straightness of stem?
Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling,
accounts for the failure,
20 — Here blew wind, so it bent: there the
snow lodged, so it broke?
Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill,
mere bite of the insect
Gnawed, gnarled, warped their worst:
passive it lay to offence.
King — I was man, no more: what I recog-
nised faulty I punished,
Laying it prone: be sure, more than a
man had I proved,
Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birth-
time had saved it, nor simply
Owned the distortion's excuse, — hin-
dered it wholly: nay, more —
Even a man, as I sat in my place to do
judgment, and pallid
Criminals passing to doom shuddered
away at my foot,
Could I have probed thro' the face to the
heart, read plain a repentance,
30 Crime confessed fools' play, virtue as-
cribed to the wise,
Had I not staved the consignment to doom,
not dealt the renewed ones
Life to retrace the past, light to re-
trieve the misdeed?
Thus had I done, and thus to have done
much more it behoves thee,
Zeus who madest man — flawless or
faulty, thy work!
What if the charge were true, as thou
moutheest, — Ixion the cherished
Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the
godships and fell,
Forfeit thro' arrogance? Stranger! I
clothed, with the grace of our human,
Inhumanity — gods, natures I likened
to ours.
Man among men I had borne me till gods
forsooth must regard me
— Nay, must approve, applaud, claim 40
as a comrade at last.
Summoned to enter their circle, I sat —
their equal, how other?
Love should be absolute love, faith is in
fulness or nought.
“I am thy friend, be mine!” smiled Zeus:
“If Heré attract thee,”
Blushed the imperial check, “then — as
thy heart may suggest!”
Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love
hailed love as its fellow,
“Zeus, we are friends — how fast!
Heré, my heart for thy heart!”
Then broke smile into fury of frown, and
the thunder of “Hence, fool!”
Then thro' the kiss laughed scorn
“Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?”
Then from Olympus to Erebus, then from
the rapture to torment,
Then from the fellow of gods — misery's 50
mate, to the man!
— Man henceforth and for ever, who lent
from the glow of his nature
Warmth to the cold, with light coloured
the black and the blank.
So did a man conceive of your passion, you
passion-protesters!
So did he trust, so love — being the
truth of your lie!
You to aspire to be Man! Man made you
who vainly would ape him:
You are the hollowness, he — filling
you, falsifies void.
Even as — witness the emb!m, Hell's sad
triumph suspended,
Born of my tears, sweat, blood — burst-
ing to vapour above —
Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike
startles the darkness,
Cold white — jewelry quenched — jus- 60
tifies, glorifies pain.
Strive, mankind, though strife endure
through endless obstruction,
Stage after stage, each rise marred by ac-
certain a fall!

Baffled for ever — yet never so baffled but,
e'en in the baffling,

When Man's strength proves weak,
checked in the body or soul —

Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence,
— Ixion's

Made for a purpose of hate, — clothing
the entity Thou,

— Medium whence that entity strives for
the Not-Thou beyond it,

Fire elemental, free, frame unencum-
bered, the All, —

Never so baffled but — when, on the verge
of an alien existence,

Heartened to press, by pangs burst to
the infinite Pure,

Nothing is reached but the ancient weak-
ness still that arrests strength,

10 Circumbient still, still the poor hu-
man array,

Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty —
all it has burst through,

Thought to escape, — fresh formed,
found in the fashion it fled, —

Never so baffled but — when Man pays
the price of endeavour,

Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-
doomed to the wheel, —

Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat
and blood of his torment,

E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let
him look and rejoice!

What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that
turns to a rapture

Pain — and despair's murk mists blends
in a rainbow of hope?

What is beyond the obstruction, stage by
stage tho' it baffle?

10 Back must I fall, confess "Ever the
weakness I fled"?

No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-
unobstructed!

Zeus was Zeus — not Man: wrecked by
his weakness, I whirl.

Out of the wreck I rise — past Zeus to
the Potency o'er him!

I — to have hailed him my friend! I
— to have clasped her — my love!

Pallid birth of my pain, — where light,
where light is, aspiring

Thither I rise, whilst thou — Zeus, keep
the godship and sink!

JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH.

[Rabbi Yehudah Hannasi, otherwise
Jochanan (John) Hakkadosh, was born
in the second Christian century. Hak-
kadosh means holy.]

"THIS now, this other story makes amends
And justifies our Mishna," quoth the Jew
Aforesaid. "Tell it, learnedest of friends!"

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
O'er Schiphaz¹ city, bringing joy and mirth,
— So had ye deemed; while the reverse
was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow
birth

In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
Midnight, not morning settled on the
earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou
wouldst die

Our much-enlightened master, Israel's
prop,

Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?²

Old, yea but, undiminished of a drop,
The vital essence pulsed through heart and

brain;
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek, whereof a
skein

Handmaids might weave — hairs silk-
soft, silver-white,

Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in
vain

Had Physic striven her best against the
spite

Of fell disease: the Rabbi must succumb;
And, round the couch whereon in piteous

plight

He lay a-dying, scholars, — awe-struck,
dumb

Throughout the night-watch, — roused
themselves and spoke

One to the other: "Ere death's touch be-
numb

"His active sense, — while yet 'neath
Reason's yoke

Obedient toils his tongue, — befits we
claim

The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

"Shed us an acorn which may, all the
same,

Grow to a temple-pillar, — dear that
day! —

When Israel's scattered seed finds place
and name

"Among the envious nations. Lamp us,
pray,

Thou the Enlightener! Partest hence in
peace?

Hailst without regret — much less, dis-
may —

¹ Perhaps Sheeraz.

² Probably an imaginary Rabbi.

"The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found ob-
struct?

Calmly envisagest the sure increase

"Of knowledge? Eden's tree must hold
unplucked

Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not
sucked?

"Say, does age acquiesce in vanished
youth?

Still towers thy purity above — as erst —
Our pleasant follies? Be thy last word —
truth!"

10 The Rabbi groaned; then, grimly, "Last
as first

The truth speak I — in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

"For such presumption, die now hardly
man.

What have I proved of life? To live, in-
deed,

That much I learned: but here lies
Jochanan

"More luckless than stood David when, to
speed

His fighting with the Philistine, they
brought

Saul's harness forth: whereat, 'Alack, I
need

"'Armour to arm me, but have never
fought

20 With sword and spear, nor tried to man-
age shield,

Proving arms' use, as well-trained warrior
ought.

"'Only a sling and pebbles can I wield!'

So he: while I, contrariwise, 'No trick
Of weapon helpful on the battle-field

"'Comes unfamiliar to my theoretic:

But, bid me put in practice what I know,
Give me a sword — it stings like Moses'
stick,

"'A serpent I let drop apace.' E'en so,
I, — able to comport me at each stage

30 Of human life as never here below

"Man played his part, — since mine the
heritage

Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
Ye rightly praise, — I, therefore, who, thus
sage,

"Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
Life's annals with example how I played
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist, — (all of
which

"Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
The world's ear — 'Ah, the Past, the pearl-
gift thrown

To hogs, time's opportunity we made

"'So light of, only recognised when flown! 40
Had we been wise!') — in fine, I — wise
enough, —

What profit brings me wisdom never shown

"Just when its showing would from each
rebuff

Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to
bounds

Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track
too rough

"For youth's unsteady footstep, climb the
rounds

Of life's long ladder, one by slippery one,
Yet make no stumble? Me hard fate con-
founds

"With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
By promising to teach another cry 50
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the
sun

"I look my last at is insulted by.

What cry, — ye ask? Give ear on every
side!

Witness yon Lover! 'How entrapped am
I!

"'Methought, because a virgin's rose-lip
vied

With ripe Khubbezleh's,¹ needs must
beauty mate

With meekness and discretion in a bride:

"'Bride she became to me who wail — too
late —

Unwise I loved! That's one cry.
'Mind's my gift:

I might have loaded me with lore, full 60
weight

"'Pressed down and running over at each
rift

O' the brain-bag where the famished clung
and fed.

I filled it with what rubbish! — would not
sift

"'The wheat from chaff, sound grain from
musty — shed

Poison abroad as oft as nutriment —
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

"'Unwise I learned! That's two. 'In
dwarf's-play spent

Was giant's prowess: warrior all unversed
In war's right waging, I struck brand, was
lent

¹ A fanciful name.

"For steel's fit service, on mere stone —
and cursed
Alike the shocked limb and the shivered
steel,
Seeing too late the blade's true use which
erst

"How was I blind to! My cry swells the
peal —
Unwise I fought!" That's three. But
wherefore waste
Breath on the wailings longer? Why re-
veal

"A root of bitterness whereof the taste
Is noisome to Humanity at large?
First we get Power, but Power absurdly
placed

10 "In Folly's keeping, who resigns her
charge
To Wisdom when all Power grows noth-
ing worth:
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm
and target

"When, like your Master's, soon below the
earth
With worms shall warfare only be. Fare-
well,
Children! I die a failure since my birth!"

"Not so!" arose a protest as, pell-mell,
They pattered from his chamber to the
street,
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums!
tell

That such resource there is. Put case,
there meet

20 The Nine Points of Perfection — rarest
chance —
Within some saintly teacher whom the
fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
O'ertake before fit teaching born of these
Have magnified his scholars' counte-
nance, —

If haply folk compassionating please
To render up — according to his store,
Each one — a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 'tis set before
Earth's benefit should the Saint, Hakka-
dosh,

30 Favoured thereby, attain to full fourscore —
If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy
"Bosh!")

A year, a month, a day, an hour — to eke
Life out, — in him away the gift shall wash

* Chaldean versions of the Old Testament
dephrased out of the oral translations and
paraphrases of the Scriptures read in the syna-
gogues of the Jews.

That much of ill-spent time recorded,
streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise: truth, though strange
to speak!

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth
and age,
All Israel, thronging, waited for the last
News of the loved one. "'Tis the final
stage:

"Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread 40
fast
The way of all flesh!" So announced that
apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik:² "Yet, O Breth-
ren, cast

"No eye to earthward! Look where
heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher — yon ray-shot
robe
Of sun-threads — on the constellation
mapped

"And mentioned by our Elders, — yea,
from Job
Down to Satam, — as figuring forth —
what?
Perpend a mystery! Ye call it *Dob* —

"The Bear": I trow, a wiser name than
that
Were *Aisch* — "The Bier":³ a corpse 50
those four stars hold,
Which — are not those Three Daughters
weeping at,

"*Banoth*? I judge so: list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours
this Bier
Goes and returns, about the East-cone
rolled,

"So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labour, strong and clear,

"About the Pole — that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some
Saint
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue 60

"To all ye seek? The Rabbi's lamp-flame
faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life
from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need ac-
quaint

* A fanciful name.

³ The Jews called the constellation Krome-
trus, or the "Great Bear;" the Bier and the tail
stars of the Bear they called the *Three Daughters*.
Banoth means daughters.

"The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Ten-fold requital? — urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death
procures

"Such praise for, that 'tis now men's sole
debate
Which of the Ten, who volunteered at
Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great

"Beyond his fellows? Was it thou — the
comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered thro' their bloody
foam

io "Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)¹
'Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One'? Or
thou,
Jischab? — who smiledst, burning, since
there lay,

"Burning along with thee, our Law! I
trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,

"To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt
thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look'st
to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou
so soared,

zo "Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland
bird,
There's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms,
to lend

"Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou,
averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion's mount, — doth, all-
unheard,

"My pleading fail to move thee? Toss
some rag
Shall staunch our wound, some minute
never missed
From swordsman's lustihood like thine!
Wilt lag

¹ Rabbi Akiba was a Jewish teacher, who had much to do with the great collection of Rabbinical discussions on the law of Moses known as the *Mishnah*. The comments on the *Mishnah* are called *Gemara*, and both together make up the *Talmud*. Akiba took part in the famous rebellion against Rome led by Barcocheba A.D. 132-135, who was believed to be the Messiah. The rebellion failed, and Akiba is said to have been scraped to death with an iron comb.

"In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for, — thou,
wide-known
For statecraft? whom, 'tis said, an if thou 30
list,

"The Shah himself would seat beside his
throne,
So valued were advice from thee" . . .
But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not
alone

From those addressed, but, far as well as
near,
The crowd broke into clamour: "Mine,
mine, mine
Lop from my life the excrescence, never
fear!

"At me thou lookedst, markedst me!
Assign
To me that privilege of granting life —
Mine, mine!" Then he: "Be patient! I
combine

"The needful portions only, wage no strife 40
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'Tis the knife

"I stop, — would cut its thread too short.
About
As much as helps life last the proper term,
The appointed Fourscore, — that I crave
and scout

"A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
Change at fit season to the butterfly!
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

"This judgment. Of our worthies, none
ranks high
As Perida² who kept the famous school: 50
None rivalled him in patience: none! For
why?

"In lecturing it was his constant rule,
Whatever he expounded, to repeat
— Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some
fool

"Should fail to understand him fully —
(feat
Unparalleled, Uzzean!³) — do ye mark? —
Five hundred times! So might he en-
trance beat

"For knowledge into howsoever dark
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed,
at close
Of one especial lecture, not one spark 60

² A Jewish teacher famous for his patience.

³ Job.

- "Of light was found to have illumed the
rows
Of pupils round their pedagogue. 'What,
still
Impenetrable to me? Then — here goes!'"
- "And for a second time he sets the rill
Of knowledge running, and five hundred
times
More re-repeats the matter — and gains
nil.
- "Out broke a voice from heaven: 'Thy
patience climbs
Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou,
rather, quick
Ascend to bliss — or, since thy zeal sub-
limes
- 10 "Such drudgery, will thy back still bear
its crick,
Bent o'er thy class, — thy voice drone spite
of drouth, —
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt
stick?"
- "'To heaven with me!' was in the good
man's mouth,
When all his scholars, — cruel-kind were
they! —
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North
and South,
- "Rending the welkin with their shout of
'Nay -
No heaven as yet for our instructor!
Grant
Five hundred years on earth for Perida!'"
- "And so long did he keep instructing!
Want
- 20 Our Master no such misery! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant
- "Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer! — and
conclude,
Statist, with thine! One year, — ye will
not shake
- "My purpose to accept no more. So rude?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must
press
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The
mood
- "Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave
my gown,
- 30 Ye overbold ones! Your life's gift, you
guess,
- "Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee
down!
- Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Fare-
well,
Seniors and saviours, sharers of renown
- "With Jochanan henceforward!" Straight-
way fell
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health
Hale every way, so potent was the spell.
-
- O the rare Spring-time! Who is he by
stealth
Approaches Jochanan? — embowered that
sits
Under his vine and figtree mid the wealth
- Of garden-sights and sounds, since inter-
mits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays nor stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits
- The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, im-
prints
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious,
hints
- "What if it should be time? A period
ends —
That of the Lover's gift — his quarter-
year
Of lustihood: 'tis just thou make amends,
- "Return that loan with usury: so, here
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate, 50
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make
appear
- "Thy profit from experience! Plainly
state
How men should Love!" Thus he: and
to him thus
The Rabbi: "Love, ye call it? — rather,
Hate!
- "What wouldst thou? Is it needful I
discuss
Wherefore new sweet wine, poured in
bottles caked
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us
- "Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-un-
slaked?
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there
wound
Langours and yearnings: not a sense but 60
ached
- "Weighed on by fancied form and fea-
ture, sound
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no pro-
found

- "Purple of noon-oppression, no light
wile
O' the West wind, but transformed itself
till — brief —
Before me stood the phantasy ye style
- "Youth's love, the joy that shall not come
to grief,
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.
- "Had Age's hard cold knowledge only
spared
That ignorance of Youth! But now the
dream,
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared
- o "As fares the pigeon, finding what may
seem
Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
Coiled to encasp her. See, Eve stands
supreme
- "In youth and beauty! Take her for thy
bride!
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out
was dew
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon quick
dried
- "While Youth bent gazing at its red and
blue
Supposed perennial, — never dreamed the
sun
Which kindled the display would quench
it too.
- "Graces of shape and colour — everyone
With its appointed period of decay
When ripe to purpose! 'Still, these dead
and done,
- "Survives the woman-nature — the soft
sway
Of undefinable omnipotence
O'er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam's
clay."
- "Ay, if my physics taught not why and
whence
The attraction! Am I like the simple
steer
Who, from his pasture lured inside the
fence
- "Where yoke and goad await him, holds
that mere
Kindliness prompts extension of the
hand
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and
near
- "His nose — in proof that, of the horned
band,
- The farmer best affected him? Beside,
Steer, since his calfhood, got to under-
stand
- "Farmers a many in the world so wide
Were ready with a handful just as choice
Or choicer — maize and cummin, treats
untried.
- "Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
I gained the peacock? 'Las me, round I
look,
And lo — 'With me thou wouldst have
blamed no voice
- "Like hers that daily deafens like a rook: 40
I am the phoenix! — 'I, the lark, the dove,
— The owl,' for aught, knows he who
blindly took
- "Peacock for partner, while the vale, the
grove,
The plain held bird-mates in abundance.
There!
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found
out Love
- "Long ago. War seems better worth
man's care.
But leave me! Disappointment finds a
balm
Haply in slumber." "This first step o' the
stair
- "To knowledge fails me, but the victor's
palm
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap 50
A stumbling-block. Experienced, gather
calm,
- "Thou excellence of Judah, cured by
sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap
- "Fruit of my planting!" So, with length-
ened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more
waxed
And waned, and not until the Summer-
space
- Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi's patience, But at three
months' end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed 60
- The sage lay musing till the noon should
spend
Its ardour. Up comes Tsaddik, who but
he,
With "Master, may I warn thee, nor
offend,

- "That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch — not the youngling twig —
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,
- "To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who, with a scantling of his store, made big
- "Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintance-ship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are
- 10 "Of battle dowry, — he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle! Since thou know'st
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,
- "More need that we improve them!" —
"Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftest to the uttermost —
- "Takes the straight way thro' lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good, — may so obtain
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,
- "Too late attained by preachments all in vain —
20 The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with: does cut cord close again?
- "Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse
- "Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle — *Wherein differs Man from beast?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves:
- "Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse 'To our fellows — good
30 I' the highest! — not diminished but increased
- "By the condition plainly understood
— Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I' the highest to ourselves! Fine sparks, that brood
- "Confusedly in Man, 'tis war bids spurt
Forth into flame: as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert
- "Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass
- "Some push external, — strong to set at 40 large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven and light up earth from marge to marge:
- "Since force by motion makes — what erst was ice —
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device
- "For proving the full prettiness of fire!
Ay, thus we prattle — young: but old — why, first,
Where's that same Right and Good — (the wise inquire) —
- "So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war's woeful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague cursed
- "The more your benefited Man — offence,
Or what suppressed the offender? Say it did —
Show us the evil cured by violence,
- "Submission cures not also! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out of virtue hid
- "In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves 60 behind
- "The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's¹ children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with '*Sic Jesus vult.*'
- "Say there's a tyrant by whose death we earn

¹ Stands for the Gentile in Jewish phraseology.

Freedom, and justify a war to wage:
Good! — were we only able to discern

"Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside!
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its
rage

"— How shared they his ill-doing? Far
and wide
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but
died

"In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
to Life: therefore each paid tribute, — honest soul, —
To that same Right and Good ourselves
are fain

"To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable — yea, the sole

"Fig I afford you! 'Dost thou dwarf my
vine?'
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field), 'Receive
condign

"Punishment, prompt removal by the
stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root!
20 Long did he hack and hew, the root no less

"As long defied him, for its tough strings
shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire:
All that he did was — shake to the tree's
foot

"Leafage and fruitage, things we most
require
For shadow and refreshment: which good
deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

"His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes
a frost,
One natural night's work, and there's
little need

30 "Of hacking, hewing: lo, the tree's a ghost!
Perished it starves, black death from top-
most bough
To farthest-reaching fibre! Shall I boast

"My rough work, — warfare, — helped
more? Loving, now —
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

"He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love's willingness, — once 'ware of what
she lacked,
His loved one, — to go work for that, nor
wince

"At self-expenditure: he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field 40
Required defence because the sun attacked,

"He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to
wield

"The intellectual weapon — poet-lays, —
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go
your ways!

"I sleep out disappointment." "Come
along,
Never lose heart! There's still as much
again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong. 50

"Done by its earlier moiety — explain
Wherefore, who may! The Poet's mood
comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

"Should pulse within him? Jochanan,
thou reck'st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unper-
plexed

"Above dry dubitation! Song's the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mis-
take
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun
and moon —

"Fighter and Lover, — which for most 60
men make
All they descry in heaven, — stand both
stockstill
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou
wake!"

Autumn brings Tsaddik. "Ay, there
speeds the rill
Loaded with leaves: a scowling sky, be-
side:
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

"Whiten and shudder — symptoms far and
wide
Of gleanings-time's approach; and glean
good store:
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

"And ripe experimenter! Three months
more

Have ministered to growth of Song: that
graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

"Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the
draught

"Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither:
vain we tap

A youngling stem all green and immature:
Experience must secrete the stuff, our hap

"Will be to quench Man's thirst with,
glad and sure

10 That fancy wells up through corrective
fact:

Missing which test of truth, though flowers
allure

"The goodman's eye with promise, soon
the pact

Is broken, and 'tis flowers, — mere words,
— he finds

When things, — that's fruit, — he looked
for. Well, once cracked

"The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel
grinds!

Song may henceforth boast substance!
Therefore, hail

Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds!

"Thou from whose eye hath dropped the
envious scale

Which hides the truth of things and sub-
stitutes

20 Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

"To transpierce, — hast entrusted to the
lute's

Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

"As only knowledge can?" "A fount un-
scaled"

(Sighed Jochanan) "should seek the
heaven in leaps

To die in dew-gems — not find death, con-
gealed

"By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, en-
swathed

in dark and fear, primæval mystery
sleeps —

30 "Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of
good and fair

In soaring upwards had dissolved, un-
scathed

"By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, The Future
— that's

Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

"Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O' the Present! Day's the song-time for
the lark,

Night for her music boasts but owls and
bats.

"And what's the Past but night — the
deep and dark

Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thickened with 40
its drowned

Dead fancies which no sooner touched the
mark

"They aimed at — fact — than all at once
they found

Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit
to reach

And roll in æther, revel — robed and
crowned

"As truths, confirmed by falsehood all and
each —

Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!

Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age
impeach

"Thy least of promises to re-instate
Adam in Eden! Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst! — the fool cicada's 50
fate,

"Who holds that after Summer next comes
Spring,

Than Summer's self sun-warmed, spice-
scented more.

Fighting was better! There, no fancy-
fling

"Pitches you past the point was reached
of yore

By Samsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valour who, before

"Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

"Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that 60
were just

To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
Atop the universe: no vulgar lust

"To gratify — fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far — or overlooked
So largely, rather — that mine eye should
rove

"World-wide and rummage earth, the
many-nooked,

Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back
hooked and crooked

"By the strong shepherd who, from-out his
stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

"There, baldness or excrescence, — that,
with grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a
peace

"Steals o'er the Statist, — while, in wit, a
match
10 For shrewd Ahithophel, in wisdom . . .
well,
His name escapes me — somebody, at
watch

"And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen!" — at which
word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

"Cold weather!" shivered Tsaddik.
"Yet the hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford

"Least pasture, and alike disgrace the
plain
Tall tree and lowly shrub. 'Tis so with us
20 Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in
vain

"While busy youth culls just what we
discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

"I make one more appeal to! Thine
amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast

"The end approaches, while they jeer and
jape,
These sons of Shimei: 'Justify your boast!
What have ye gained from Death by twelve
months' rape?"

30 "Statesman, what cure hast thou for —
least and most —
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly
dosed,

"Forget disparity, bid each go gay
That, with his bauble, — with his burden,
this?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

"Men's lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-
believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

"Coinage and currency? Make haste,
retrieve
The precious moments, Master!" Where- 40
unto

There snarls an "Ever laughin' in thy
sleeve,

"Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain
a clue
To guide man where life's wood is intri-
cate:
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest
through

"When every oak trunk takes the eye?
Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging
finds —
Smothered in briars — that the small's the
great!

"All men are men: I would all minds
were minds!
Whereas 'tis just the many's mindless
mass
That most needs helping: labourers and 50
hinds

"We legislate for — not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the
whip
And bridle, — proper help for mule and
ass,

"Did the brutes know! In vain our
statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries "Tis me thou shouldst
equip

"With equine trappings!" o., in humbler
mood,
'Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work —
Adequate rumination o'er my food!

"Better remain a Poet! Needs it irl 60
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere,
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and
murk

"Round about Goshen? Though light
disappear,
Shut inside, — temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

"Shows each astonished starrer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge!
That's the way,
The only way — I see it at a glance —

- "To legislate for earth! As poet. . . .
Stay!
What is . . . I would that . . . were it
. . . I had been . . .
O sudden change, as if my arid clay
- "Burst into bloom! . . ." "A change
indeed, I ween,
And change the last!" sighed Tsaddik as
he kissed
The closing eyelids. "Just as those serene
- "Princes of Night apprised me! Our
acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made
desist
- 10 "In passage round the Pole (O Mishna's
lore —
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full four-
score
- "The Rabbi's years. I see each shoulder
shrug!
What have we gained? Away the Bier
may roll!
To-morrow, when the Master's grave is
dug,
- "In with his body I may pitch the scroll
I hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man's Life: one blank's
the whole!
- "Love, war, song, statesmanship — no
gain, all loss,
20 The stars' bestowment! We on our return
To-morrow merely find — not gold but
dross,
- "The body not the soul. Come, friends,
we learn
At least thus much by our experiment —
That — that . . . well, find what, whom
it may concern!"
- But next day through the city rumours
went
Of a new persecution; so, they fled
All Israel, each man, — this time, — from
his tent,
- Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the
dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
30 Some three months after, to the cave they
sped
- Where lay the Sage, — a reverential train!
Tsaddik first enters. "What is this I
view?
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain
- "Of Aisch to stop within their courses
True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must
urge
Their offerings on me: can it be — one
threw
- "Life at him and it stuck? There needs
the scourge
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee,
grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge
- "Just to explain no friend was ministrant, 40
This time, of life to thee! Some jacka-
napes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant
- "Scurvy unripe existence — wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour — on that
grand wine,
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes
- "May fitly image forth this life of
thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees — con-
densed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine!
- "Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now
incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief 50
wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed!"
- And slowly woke, — like Shushan's flower¹
besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought
- Her captive bee, mid store of sweets to
choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never, — whose, O
whose
- Might seem that countenance, uplift, all
eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy? "How ye have ap- 60
peased
- "The strife within me, bred this whole
content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life, — by whom was
lent
- "The power to work this miracle at last, —
Exceeds my guess. Though — *ignorance*
confirmed
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

¹ The lily.

"Vainly about to tell you — fittier
termed —
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either! Henceforth
wormed

"From out my heart is every snake that
bites
The dove that else would brood there:
doubt, which kills
With hiss of 'What if sorrows end de-
lights?'

"Fear which stings ease with 'Work the
Master wills!
Experience which coils round and strangles
quick
Each hope with 'Ask the Past if hoping
skills

to "To work accomplishment, or proves a
trick
Wiling thee to endeavour! Strive, fool,
stop
Nowise, so live, so die — that's law! why
kick

"Against the pricks?' All out-wormed!
Slumber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss
within!
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves
a-top

"Her wings triumphant! Come what will,
I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where's a sin

"Except in doubting that the light, which
lured
20 The unwary into darkness, meant no
wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused
immured

"By mists I should have pressed thro',
passed along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the
boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

"Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like,
destroys, —
Not the man's slow conviction 'Vanity
Of vanities — alike my griefs and joys!'

"Ice! — thawed (look up) each bird, each
insect by —
(Look round) by all the plants that break
in bloom,
30 (Look down) by every dead friend's
memory

"That smiles 'Am I the dust within my
tomb?'
Not either, but both these — amalgam
rare —
Mix in a product, not from Nature's
womb,

"But stuff which He the Operant — who
shall dare
Describe His operation? — strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care

"How from this tohu-bohu¹ — hopes
which dive,
And fears which soar — faith, ruined
through and through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust
— revive

"In some surprising sort, — as see, they 40
do! —
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless — O strange and
new

"Discovery! — this life proves a wine-
press — blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which — who intends

"To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

"— Nay, lives! — what, how, — too soon,
or else too late —
I was — I am . . ." ("He babbleth!" 50
Tsaddik mused)
"O Thou Almighty who canst reinstate

"Truths in their primal clarity, confused
By man's perception, which is man's and
made
To suit his service, — how, once disabused

"Of reason which sees light half shine half
shade,
Because of flesh, the medium that adjusts
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

"And hindrance, — how to eyes earth's
air encrusts,
When purged and perfect to receive truth's
beam
Pouring itself on the new sense it trusts 60

"With all its plenitude of power, — how
seen
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
Oppugnant natures — Right and Wrong,
we deem

* Void and waste.

"Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine

"Henceforth what, erst divided, caused
you quail —
So huge the chasim between the false and
true,
The dream and the reality! All hail,

"Day of my soul's deliverance — day the
new,
The never-ending! What though every
shape
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

10 "Even to success each semblance of escape
From my own bounded self to some all-
fair
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

"Like that old giant's, feigned of fools —
on air,
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To
love —
That lesson was to learn not here — but
there —

"On earth, not here! 'Tis there we learn,
— there prove
Our parts upon the stuff we needs must
spoil,
Striving at mastery, there bend above

"The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year
of toil

20 Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

"His hand, cried 'So much for attempt —
anon
Performance! Taught to mould the living
vasc,
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and
gone?"

"Could I impart and could thy mind em-
brace
The secret, Tsaddik!" "Secret none to
me!"
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. "The truth
I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
30 Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

"Wherein, though the last breath have
passed the throat,
So that 'The man is dead' we may pro-
nounce,
Yet is the Ruach — (thus do we denote

"The imparted Spirit) — in no haste to
bounce
From its entrusted Body, — some three
days
Lingers ere it relinquish to the pounce

"Of hawk-clawed Death his victim.
Further says
Halaphta, 'Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly
ways

"Tend to perfection, very nearly get 40
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

"Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet
with brine,
That's neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both — so meet the earthly and divine

"And each is either.' Thus I hold him
graced —
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind
embraced

"Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings!" Thus was brought 50
about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan:
Thou hast him, — sinner-saint, live-dead,
boy-man, —
Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan!

NOTE. — This story can have no better
authority than that of the treatise, existing
dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical
writing, מִשְׁךְ שֶׁל רִבּוּי בְּרִיּוֹת, from which
I might have helped myself more liberally.
Thus, instead of the simple reference to 60
"Moses' stick," — but what if I make
amends by attempting three illustrations,
when some thirty might be composed on
the same subject, equally justifying that
pithy proverb מִמֶּשֶׁה עַד מֹשֶׁה לֹא קָם כְּמֹשֶׁה.

I.

MOSES the Meek was thirty cubits high,
The staff he strode with — thirty cubits
long:

And when he leapt, so muscular and
strong

Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
By thirty cubits more: we learn thereby 70
He reached full ninety cubits — am I
wrong? —

When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred
song,

With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
The just dimensions of the giant Og.
And yet he barely touched — this marvel
lacked

Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
Of marvels — barely touched — to be
exact —

The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
That fain would match an ox in stature:
fact!

II.

And this same fact has met with unbelief!
How saith a certain traveller? "Young,
I chanced

o To come upon an object — if thou
canst,

Guess me its name and nature! 'Twas, in
brief,

White, hard, round, hollow, of such
length, in chief,

— And this is what especially enhanced
My wonder — that it seemed, as I ad-
vanced,

Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
Of marvels, this — Posterity! I walked

From end to end, — four hours walked
I, who go

A goodly pace, — and found — I have not
balked

Thine expectation, Stranger? Ay or No?

20 'Twas but Og's thigh-bone, all the while,
I stalked

Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!"

III.

Og's thigh-bone — if ye deem its measure
strange,

Myself can witness to much length of
shank

Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange

Noon heat for cool. Quoth I "On many
a grange

I have seen storks perch — legs both
long and lank:

Yon stork's must touch the bottom of
this tank,

Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
30 Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!"

"Do not so!"

Warned me a voice from heaven. "A
man let drop

His axe into that shallow rivulet —

As thou accountest — seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop

Keeps falling, nor has reached the bot-
tom yet."

[*Note.* — Dr. Berdoo says the *Hebrew*
in this note means — the first quotation,
"Collection of Many Fables;" and the
second, "From Moses to Moses (Mai-
monides) there was never one like Moses."]

NEVER THE TIME AND THE
PLACE.

NEVER the time and the place

And the loved one all together!

This path — how soft to pace!

This May — what magic weather!

Where is the loved one's face? 40

In a dream that loved one's face meets
mine,

But the house is narrow, the place is
bleak

Where, outside, rain and wind combine

With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,

With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,

With a malice that marks each word, each
sign!

O enemy sly and serpentine,

Uncoil thee from the waking man!

Do I hold the Past

Thus firm and fast 50

Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?

This path so soft to pace shall lead

Thro' the magic of May to herself indeed!

Or narrow if needs the house must be,

Outside are the storms and strangers:
we —

Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,

— I and she!

PAMBO.

[Pambo was a monk of the Desert in the
time of St. Anthony, who, after learning
the first verse of the 39th Psalm, refused
to learn any more, saying that one was
enough for him if he learnt it properly.
The poem is apparently based on a passage
in Socrates' "Ecclesiastical History," Book
iv. c. 18. In Butler's "Lives of the
Saints" there is a glowing account of St.
Pambo.]

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes
play)

With a grave tale told in crambo

— As our hearty sires were wont to say — 60

Whereof the hero is Pambo?

Do you happen to know who Pambo was?

Nor I — but this much have heard of
him:

He entered one day a college-class,

And asked — was it so absurd of him? —

"May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise
it?

In wisdom I fain would ground me:

Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
Some psalm to the purpose expound
me!"

"That psalm," the Professor smiled,
 "shall be
 Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
 Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
 Would drink there — the Nine-and-
 thirtieth.

"Verse first: *I said I will look to my
 ways
 That I with my tongue offend not.*
 How now? Why stare? Art struck in
 amaze?
 Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an
 end knot!

"He's gone! — disgusted my text should
 prove

Too easy to need explaining?
 Had he waited, the blockhead might find
 I move
 To matter that pays remaining!"

Long years went by, when — "Ha, who's
 this?

Do I come on the restive scholar
 I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,
 But that he slipped the collar?

"What? Arms crossed, brow bent,
 thought-immersed?

A student indeed! Why scruple
 To own that the lesson proposed him first
 Scarce suited so apt a pupil?

"Come back! From the beggarly ele-
 ments

To a more recondite issue
 We pass till we reach, at all events,
 Some point that may puzzle . . . Why
 'pish' you?"

From the ground looked piteous up the
 head:

"Daily and nightly, Master,
 Your pupil plods thro' that text you read,
 Yet gets on never the faster.

"At the self-same stand, — now old, then
 young!

I will look to my ways — were aching 30
 As easy as saying! — *that I with my
 tongue
 Offend not* — and 'scape pooh-poohing

"From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?
 Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy
 The stream I would drink at once, — but
 once!

That — thus I resume my study!"

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo!

Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,

Lack not the critic's flambeau, 40
 And *look to my ways*, yet, much the
 same,

Offend with my tongue — like
 Pambol

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES.

1884.

[Ferishtah is the name of a Persian historian of the seventeenth century, but the poet has not done more than make use of the historian's name. There is no Persian poet called Ferishtah, and the stories are all inventions.]

"His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious." — Article "Shakespear," JEREMY COLLIER'S *Historical &c. Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1701.

"You, Sir, I entertain you for one of my Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed." — *King Lear*, act iii. sc. 6.

PROLOGUE.

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?

Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan's

To — Lyre with Spit ally.

They pluck the birds, — some dozen
luscious lumps,

Or more or fewer, —

Then roast them, heads by heads and
rumps by rumps,

Stuck on a skewer.

But first, — and here's the point I fain
would press, —

Don't think I'm tattling! —

They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
— What, 'twixt each fatling?

First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a
toasted square:

Then, a strong sage-leaf:

(So we find books with flowers dried here
and there

Lest leaf engage leaf.)

First, food — then, piquancy — and last
of all

Follows the thirdling:

Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your
tooth must bite

Ere reach the birdling.

Now, were there only crust to crunch, you'd
wince:

Unpalatable!

Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent — so's a quince:
Eat each who's able!

But through all three bite boldly — lo, the
gust!

Flavour — no fixture —

Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust
In fine admixture.

So with your meal, my poem: masticate
Sense, sight and song there! ³⁰
Digest these, and I praise your peptics'
state,

Nothing found wrong there.

Whence springs my illustration who can
tell?

— The more surprising

That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice
so well

For gormandising.

A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,

Delightful Gressoney!

Who laughest "Take what is, trust what
may be!"

That's Life's true lesson, — eh? ⁴⁰

MAISON DELAPIERRE,
GRESSONEY ST. JEAN, VAL D'AOSTA,
September 12, '83.

THE EAGLE.

DERVISH — (though yet un-dervished, call
him so

No less beforehand: while we drudged our
way,

Other his worldly name was: when he
wrote

Those verses we Persians praise him for,
— True fairy-work — Ferishtah grew his

style) —

Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one
eve,

And noted on a bough a raven's nest

Whereof each youngling gaped with callow
beak

Widened by want; for why? beneath the
tree

Dead lay the mother-bird. "A piteous so
chance!

How shall they 'scape destruction?"
sighed the sage

— Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there

swooped

An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh where-
with

He stayed their craving, then resought the
sky.

"Ah, foolish, faithless me!" the observer
smiled,

"Who toil and toil to eke out life,
when lo

Providence cares for every hungry mouth!"
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing, — neither
meat

Nor drink would purchase by his handi-
work.

Then, — for his head swam and his limbs
grew faint, —

Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in
dream

God thus admonished: "Hast thou
marked my deed?"

15 Which part assigned by providence dost
judge

Was meant for man's example? Should
he play

The helpless weakling, or the helpful
strength

That captures prey and saves the perish-
ing?

Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who
lack!"

Waking, "I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food
the more,

Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congre-
gate

In towns, not woods, — to Ispahan forth-
with!"

20 Round us the wild creatures, overhead the
trees,

Underfoot the moss-tracks, — life and love
with these!

I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in
flowers:

All the long lone Summer-day, that green-
wood life of ours!

Rich-pavilioned, rather, — still the world
without, —

Inside — gold-roofed silk-walled silence
round about!

Queen it thou on purple, — I, at watch and
ward

Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy
slave, love's guard!

So, for us no world? Let throngs press
thee to me!

Up and down amid men, heart by heart
fare we!

30 Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice,
hateful face!

God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls
should souls have place.

THE MELON-SELLER.

GOING his rounds one day in Ispahan, —
Half-way on Dervishhood, not wholly
there, —

Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
Came startled on a well-remembered face.

"Can it be? What, turned melon-seller
— thou?"

Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon
step

Where dogs brush by thee and express
contempt?

Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-
out gourd!

Nay, sunk to slicing up, for readier sale,
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a
swine?

Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister,
men saw

Ride on his right-hand while a trumpet
blew

And Persia hailed the Favourite? Yea,
twelve years

Are past, I judge, since that transcendancy,
And thou didst peculate and art abased;

No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold
in hand

Persia, couldst halve and quarter, mince its
pulp

As pleased thee, and distribute — melon-
like —

Portions to whoso played the parasite,
Or suck — thyself — each juicy morsel.

How
Enormous thy abjection, — hell from
heaven,

Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper
me!

Dost thou curse God for granting twelve
years' bliss

Only to prove this day's the direr lot?"

Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once
more

Luminous and imperial, from the rags.

"Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints

A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's

award,
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy a
slice,

Or go to school!"

To school Ferishtah went;
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan

To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
— Where they dig turquoise: there kept

school himself,
The melon-seller's speech, his stock in
trade.

Some say a certain Jew adduced the word

Out of their book, it sounds so much the same,

אֲתֵדַע מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים

וְאִתְּהֵרֵט לֹא נִקְבֵּל: In Persian phrase,
"Shall we receive good at the hand of God
And evil not receive?" But great wits
jump.

Wish no word unspoken, want no look
away!

What if words were but mistake, and looks
— too sudden, say!

Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it — well
I may!

Do me justice always? Bid my heart —
their shrine —

Render back its store of gifts, old looks and
words of thine

— Oh, so all unjust — the less deserved,
the more divine?

SHAH ABBAS.

ANYHOW, once full Dervish, youngsters
came

To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.

Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
Reading a certain passage from the roll
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life:

"Master, explain this incongruity!
When I dared question 'It is beautiful,
But is it true?' — thy answer was 'In truth
Lives beauty.' I persisting — 'Beauty —

yes,

In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
That apprehends: but outside — so to
speak —

Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
Was this life lived, was this death died —
not dreamed?"

'Many attested it for fact' saidst thou.
'Many!' but mark, Sir! Half as long ago

As such things were, — supposing that they
were, —

Reigned great Shah Abbas: he too lived
and died

How say they? Why, so strong of arm,
of foot

So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
On a stag's haunch, — with one hand
grasped the stag,

With one struck down the lion: yet, no
less,

Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.

So all say, — so dost thou say?"

"Wherefore not?"

Ferishtah smiled: "though strange, the
story stands

Clear-chronicled: none tells it otherwise:
The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, be- 4c
side."

"And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's
tale,

False, very like, and futile certainly,

Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues

Combine to testify was beautiful

In deed as well as word? No fool's report

Of lion, stag and spider, but immense

With meaning for mankind, — thy race,
— thyself?"

Whereto the Dervish: "First amend, my
son,

Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief

Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name 50

The easy acquiescence of mankind

In matters nowise worth dispute, since
life

Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo —

That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed

The fact for us that somewhen Abbas
reigned,

Died, somehow slain, — a useful regis-
try, —

Which therefore we — 'believe'? Stand
forward, thou,

My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal!

I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah

Happily regnant, hath become assured, 60

By opportune discovery, that thy sires,

Son by the father upwards, track their line

To — whom but that same bearer of the
cup

Whose inadvertency was chargeable

With what therefrom ensued, disgust and
death

To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?

Whence he appoints thee, — such his
clemency, —

Not death, thy due, but just a double tax

To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds

Which flower into the brush that makes a 70
broom

Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,

Thou dost believe the story nor dispute

That punishment should signalise its
truth?

Down therefore with some twelve dinars!

Why start,

— The stag's way with the lion hard on
haunch?

'Believe the story?' — how thy words
throng fast! —

'Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote
down this,

That and the other circumstance to prove

So great a prodigy surprised the world?"

Needs must thou prove me fable can be
fact

Or ere thou coax one piece from out my
pouch!"

"There we agree, Sir: neither of us
knows,

Neither accepts that tale on evidence
Worthy to warrant the large word —
belief.

Now I get near thee! Why didst pause
abrupt,

Disabled by emotion at a tale

Might match — be frank! — for credibility

The figment of the spider and the cup?

10 — To wit, thy roll's concerning Ali's life,
Unepived — thine own word! Little
boots

Our sympathy with fiction! When I read

The annals and consider of Tahmasp

And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love,

I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware

Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake

He saw devour her, — how could such
exist,

Having nine heads? No snake boasts
more than three!

I weep, then laugh — both actions right
alike.

20 But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
When at the Day of Judgment God shall
ask

'Didst thou believe?' — what wilt thou
plead? Thy tears?

(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parch-
ment still)

What if thy tears meant love? Love lack-
ing ground

— Belief, — avails thee as it would avail

My own pretence to favour since, forsooth,

I loved the lady — I, who needs must
laugh

To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they
have three!"

"Thanks for the well-timed help that's
born, behold,

30 Out of thy words, my son, — belief and
love!

Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,

The very same we heard of, ten years since,

Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and
sound, —

Though twenty soldiers saw him die at
Yezdt, —

Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy

Declared 'twas like he some day would,
— for why?

The twenty soliders lied, he saw him stout,

Cured of all wounds at once by smear of
salve,

A Mubid's manufacture: such the tale.

40 Now, when his pair of sons were thus
apprised

Effect was twofold on them. 'Hail!'
crowed This:

'Dearer the news than dayspring after
night!

The cure-reporting youngster warrants me

Our father shall make glad our eyes once
more,

For whom, had outpoured life of mine
sufficed

To bring him back, free broached were
every vein!

'Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news

Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!

Whispered the other: 'Who believes this
boy

Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,

Return our father shall not! Might my
death

Purchase his life, how promptly would the
dole

Be paid as due!' Well, ten years pass, —
aha,

Ishak is marching homeward, — doubts,
not he,

Are dead and done with! So, our towns-
folk straight

Must take on them to counsel. 'Go thou
gay,

Welcome thy father, thou of ready faith!

Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one,

Expect paternal frowning, blame and
blows!

So do our townsfolk counsel: dost de-
mur?"

"Ferishtah like those simpletons — at loss
In what is plain as pikestaff? Pish!

Suppose

The trustful son had sighed 'So much the
worse!

Returning means — retaking heritage

Enjoyed these ten years, who should say
me nay?"

How would such trust reward him?
Trustlessness

— O' the other hand — were what pro-
cured most praise

To him who judged return impossible,

Yet hated heritage procured thereby.

A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize

Mere head's work less than heart's work:
no fool he!

"Is God less wise? Resume the roll!"

They did.

You groped your way across my room i'
the drear dark dead of night;

At each fresh step a stumble was: but,
once your lamp alight,

Easy and plain you walked again: so soon
all wrong grew right!

What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each
object, late awry,
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to
footing free — for why?
The lamp showed all, discordant late,
grown simple symmetry.

Be love your light and trust your guide,
with these explore my heart!
No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands
and souls apart!
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so, —
light shows you, — needs love start?

THE FAMILY.

A CERTAIN neighbour lying sick to death,
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree,
whence

He rose at peace: whereat objected one
"Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
Sure, thou art ignorant how close at hand
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled
so late

Thy face, had deepened down not lightened
off."

"I judge there will be respite, for I
prayed."

"Sir, let me understand, of charity!
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
'All-wise, all-good, all-mighty — God is
such!'

How then should man, the all-unworthy,
dare

Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
To pray means — substitute man's will for
God's:

Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
What is man bound to but — assent, say I?
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
That which seems worst to man to God is
best,

So, because God ordains it, best to man.
Yet man — the foolish, weak and wicked
— prays!

Urges 'My best were better, didst Thou
know!'

"List to a tale. A worthy householder
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit,
whereon

The offended limb swelled black from foot
to fork.

The husband called in aid a leech re-
nowned

World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
And bade him dictate — who forthwith
declared

'Sole remedy is amputation.' Straight

The husband sighed 'Thou knowest: be
it so!'

His three sons heard their mother sen-
tenced: 'Pause!'

Outbroke the elder: 'Be precipitate
Nowise, I pray thee! Take some gentler
way,

Thou sage of much resource! I will not 40
doubt

But science still may save foot, leg and
thigh!'

The next in age snapped petulant: 'Too
rash!

No reason for this maiming! What, Sir
Leech,

Our parent limps henceforward while we
leap?

Shame on thee! Save the limb thou must
and shalt!'

'Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones!'
followed up

The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest
too:

'The leech knows all things, we are
ignorant;

What he proposcs, gratefully accept!
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal 50

Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare
Essay its virtue and so cross the sage

By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick!
No waiting longer! There the patient

lies:
Out then with implements and operate!''

"Ah, the young devil!"

"Why, his reason chimed
Right with the Hakim's."

"Hakim's, ay — but chit's?
How? what the skilled eye saw and judged
of weight

To overbear a heavy consequence,
That — shall a sciolist affect to see? 60

All he saw — that is, all such oaf should
see,

Was just the mother's suffering."

"In my tale,
Be God the Hakim: in the husband's case,
Call ready acquiescence — aptitude

Angelic, understanding swift and sure:
Call the first son — a wise humanity,

Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt:
See in the second son — humanity,

Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but
kind.

Last comes the cackler of the brood, our 70
chit

Who, aping wisdom all beyond his years,
Thinks to discard humanity itself:

Fares like the beast which should affect to
fly

Because a bird with wings may spurn the
ground,
So, missing heaven and losing earth —
drops how
But hell-ward? No, be man and nothing
more —
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and
fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and
loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch
his eyes
And show God granted most, denying all."

Man I am and man would be, Love —
merest man and nothing more.
Bid me seem no other! Eagles boast of
pinions — let them soar!
10 I may put forth angel's plumage, once un-
manned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices, — nay, if
kneeling serves, to kneel:
Here you front me, here I find the all of
heaven that earth can feel:
Sense looks straight, — not over, under, —
perfect sees beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle: what
to me were more outside?
Wiser wisdom, better goodness? Ah,
such want the angel's wide
Sense to take and hold and keep them!
Mine at least has never tried.

THE SUN.

"AND what might that bold man's ad-
nouncement be" —

Ferishtah questioned — "which so moved
thine ire

That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick
— in short,

20 Confute the announcer? Wipe those
drops away

Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
Mention of such enormity: now, speak!"

"He scrupled not to say — (thou war-
rantest,

O patient Sir, that I unblamed repeat
Abominable words which blister tongue?)
God once assumed on earth a human shape:
(Lo, I have spitten!) Dared I ask the grace,
Fain would I hear, of thy subtilty,
From out what hole in man's corrupted
heart

30 Creeps such a maggot: fancies verminous
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
Of pride and folly like this pest — thyself
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath
chipped."

The sun rode high. "During our igno-
rance" —

Began Ferishtah — "folk esteemed as God
Yon orb: for argument, suppose him so, —
Be it the symbol, not the symbolised,
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.

Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
— What is he? Author of all light and
life:

Such one must needs be somewhere: this
is he.

Like what? If I may trust my human
eyes,

A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence
springs

— What, from this ball, my arms could
circle round?

All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
Inspiring me with — what? Why, love
and praise.

I eat a palatable fig — there's love
In little: who first planted what I pluck,
Obtains my little praise, too: more of both
Keeps due proportion with more cause for
each:

So, more and ever more, till most of all
Completes experience, and the orb, de-
scribed

Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
Is worshipped — which means loved and
praised at height.

Back to the first good: 'twas the gardener
gave

Occasion to my palate's pleasure: grace,
Plain on his part, demanded thanks on
mine.

Go up above this giver, — step by step,
Gain a conception of what — (how and
why,

Matters not now) — occasioned him to
give,

Appointed him the gardener of the
ground, —

I mount by just progression slow and sure
To some prime giver — here assumed yon
orb —

Who takes my worship. Whom have I in
mind,

Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
Howe'er above me? Man, I say — how
else,

I being man who worship? Here's my
hand

Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on
weight

Greater and ever greater, till at last
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops —

Hand-strength expended wholly: so, my
love

First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift,
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still
more,

Who hires the ground, who owns the
ground, Sheikh, Shah,
On and away, away and ever on,
Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
Where is the break, the change of quality
In hand's power, soul's impulsion? Gift
was grace,
The greatest as the smallest. Had I
stopped
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and
praise
As so far only fit to follow gift,
Saying 'I thanked the gardener for his fig,
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my
purse
With tomans which avail to purchase me
A fig-tree forest, shall I pay the same
With love and praise, the gardener's proper
fee?'
Justly would whoso bears a brain object
'Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
Do thou thine own part, therefore: let the
Shah
Ask more from who has more to pay.' Per-
chance
He gave me from his treasure less by much
Than the soil's servant: let that be! My
part
Is plain — to meet and match the gift and
gift
With love and love, with praise and praise,
till both
Cry 'All of us is thine, we can no more!'
So shall I do man's utmost — man to man:
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
So must I count that orb I call a fire
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)
Something that's fire and more beside.
Mere fire
— Is it a force which, giving, knows it
gives,
And wherefore: so may look for love and
praise
From me, fire's like so far, however less
In all beside? Prime cause this fire shall
be,
Uncaused, all-causing: hence begin the
gifts,
Thither must go my love and praise — to
what?
Fire? Symbol fitly serves the symbolised
Herein, — that this same object of my
thanks,
While to my mind nowise conceivable
Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
Next moment mind's conception: fire is
fire —
While what I needs must thank, must
needs include
Purpose with power, — humanity like
mine,

Imagined, for the dear necessity,
One moment in an object which the next
Confesses unimaginable. Power!
— What need of will, then? nought op-
poses power:
Why, purpose? any change must be for
worse:
And what occasion for beneficence
When all that is, so is and so must be?
Best being best now, change were for the 50
worse.
Accordingly discard these qualities
Proper to imperfection, take for type
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb, —
The perfect and, so, inconceivable, —
And what remains to love and praise? A
stone
Fair-coloured proves a solace to my eye,
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture cur-
ling drouth,
And struck by steel emits a useful spark:
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient
thing?
No, — man once, man for ever — man in 60
soul
As man in body: just as this can use
Its proper senses only, see and hear,
Taste, like or loathe according to its law
And not another creature's, — even so
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
Must move, is kindred soul: receiving good
— Man's way — must make man's due
acknowledgment,
No other, even while he reasons out
Plainly enough that, were the man un-
manned,
Made angel of, angelic every way, 70
The love and praise that rightly seek and
find
Their man-like object now, — instructed
more,
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.
Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers
scent
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose
to feed
On what himself made grateful: flower
and man,
Let each assume that scent and love alike
Being once born, must needs have use!
Man's part
Is plain — to send love forth, — astray,
perhaps:
No matter, he has done his part." 80

"Wherefrom
What is to follow — if I take thy sense —
But that the sun — the inconceivable
Confessed by man — comprises, all the
same,
Man's every-day conception of himself —
No less remaining unconceived!"

"Agreed!"

"Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
To feel as man, not otherwise, — man,
bound

By man's conditions neither less nor more,
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's
faculty

Adjudges such, — how canst thou, —
plainly bound

To take man's truth for truth and only
truth, —

Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
Falsehood confessed? Flesh simulating
fire —

10 Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
For dust — instinct with fire unknow-
able!

Where's thy man-needed truth — its proof,
nay print

Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
By man, termed knowledge? 'Tis con-
ceded thee,

We lack such fancied union — fire with
flesh:

But even so, to lack is not to gain
Our lack's suppliance: where's the trace
of such
Recorded?"

"What if such a tracing were?

If some strange story stood, — whate'er
its worth, —

20 That the immensely yearned-for, once
befell,

— The sun was flesh once? — (keep the
figure!)"

"How?

An union inconceivable was fact?"

"Son, if the stranger have convinced him-
self

Fancy is fact — the sun, besides a fire,
Holds earthly substance somehow fire
pervades

And yet consumes not, — earth, he under-
stands,

With essence he remains a stranger to, —
Fittler thou saidst 'I stand appalled before
Conception unattainable by me

30 Who need it most' — than this — 'What?
boast he holds

Conviction where I see conviction's need,
Alas, — and nothing else? then what re-
mains

But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the
fool!"

Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark es-
capes,

Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy
shapes

Some befitting cradle where the babe had
birth —

Wholly heaven's the product, unallied to
earth.

Splendours recognised as perfect in the
star! —

In our flint their home was, housed as now
they are.

MIHRAB SHAH.

QUOTH an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful!
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion
nipped —

(It swelled and blackened) — lo, is sound
again!

By application of a virtuous root
The burning has abated: that is well:
But now methinks I have a mind to ask, —
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
Nor meaning harm, — why needs a scor-
pion be?

Yea, there began, from when my thumb
last throbbed,

Advance in question framing, till I asked
Wherefore should any evil hap to man —
From ache of flesh to agony of soul —

Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency?
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself —
Man's sin, accounted such? Suppose a
world

Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant —
Man pure of evil in thought, word and
deed —

Were it not well? Then, wherefore other-
wise?

Too good result? But he is wholly good!
Hard to effect? Ay, were He impotent?
Teach me, Ferishtah!"

Said the Dervish: "Friend,
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than
thine:

I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on
neck.

Was not I glad and thankful!"

"How could head
Tumble from neck, unchopped — inform
me first!

Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
Who ever heard the like?"

"The like might hap
By natural law: I let my staff fall thus —
It goes to ground, I know not why. Sup-
pose,

Whene'er my hold was loosed, it skyward
sprang

As certainly, and all experience proved
That, just as staves when unsupported
sink,

So, unconfined, they soar?"

"Let such be law —

Why, a new chapter of sad accidents
Were added to humanity's mischance,
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step
Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
Removal from his shoulder of a weight
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
For fear my head take flight."

"Nor feel relief

Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me,
now!
What were the bond 'twixt man and man,
dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true!
Our Shah —
How stands he in thy favour? Why that
shrug?
Is not he lord and ruler?"

"Easily!

His mother bore him, first of those four
wives
Provided by his father, such his luck:
Since when his business simply was to
breathe
And take each day's new bounty. There
he stands —
Where else had I stood, were his birth-star
mine?
No, to respect men's power, I needs must
see
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and
wield the sword
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his
heart,
'Tis said, he scarcely counts his fingers
right!"

"Well, then — his princely doles! from
every feast
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
And cup they drank from, — nay, a change
besides
Of garments" . . .

"Sir, put case, for service done, —

Or best, for love's sake, — such and such a
slave
Sold his allowance of sour lentil soup
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick, —
nay,
If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
'To clout my shoe, — that were a sacrifice!"

"All praise his gracious bearing."

"All praise mine —

Or would praise did they never make
approach
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade

'Now that with eyelids thou hast touched
the earth,
Come close and have no fear, poor noth-
ingness!"

What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
And palisade about from every wind, 4c
Holds herself handsomely? The wilding,
now,
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast,
That still lifts up with something of a smile
Its poor attempt at bloom" . . .

"A blameless life,

Where wrong might revel with impunity —
Remember that!"

"The falcon on his fist —

Reclaimed and trained and belled and
beautified
Till she believes herself the Simorgh's
match —
She only deigns destroy the antelope,
Stoops at no carrion-crow: thou mar- 5a
vellest?"

"So be it, then! He wakes no love in thee
For any one of divers attributes
Commonly deemed lovable. All the
same,
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
With that internal ulcer" . . .

"Say'st thou so?

How should I guess? Alack, poor soul!
But stay —
Sure in the reach of art some remedy
Must lie to hand: or if it lurk, — that leech
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid?
Couldst not thou, Dervish, counsel in the 6a
case?"

"My counsel might be — what imports a
pang
The more or less, which puts an end to one
Odious in spite of every attribute
Commonly deemed lovable?"

"Attributes?

Faugh! — nay, Ferishtah, — 'tis an ulcer,
think!
Attributes, quotha? Here's poor flesh and
blood,
Like thine and mine and every man's, a
prey
To hell-fire! Hast thou lost thy wits for
once?"

"Friend, here they are to find and profit by!
Put pain from out the world, what room 7c
were left
For thanks to God, for love to Man? Why
thanks, —
Except for some escape, whate'er the
style,

From pain that might be, name it as thou
mayst?

Why love, — when all thy kind, save me,
suppose,

Thy father, and thy son, and . . . well,
thy dog,

To eke the decent number out — we few
Who happen — like a handful of chance
stars

From the unnumbered host — to shine
o'erhead

And lend thee light, — our twinkle all thy
store, —

We only take thy love! Mankind, for-
sooth?

Who sympathises with their general joy

10 Foolish as undeserved? But pain — see
God's

Wisdom at work! — man's heart is made
to judge

Pain deserved nowhere by the common
flesh

Our birthright, — bad and good deserve
alike

No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,
Greed, cruelty, injustice, crave (we hold)

Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:
But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh

Triumphant from the bar whereto ar-
raigned

Soul quakes with reason. In the eye of
God

20 Pain may have purpose and be justified:
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,

A hateful chance no man but would avert
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to
God

And love to man, — from man take these
away,

And what is man worth? Therefore,
Mihrab Shah,

Tax me my bread and salt twice over,
claim

Laila my daughter for thy sport, — go on!
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry

Beats mine, — thou meritest a dozen
deaths!

30 But — ulcer in the stomach, — ah, poor
soul,

Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!"

So, the head aches and the limbs are
faint!

Flesh is a burthen — even to you!

Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?

Why are my ailments none or few?

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:

Body so strong and will so weak!

The slave stands fit for the labour — yes,

But the master's mandate is still to
seek.

You, now — what if the outside clay
Helped, not hindered the inside flame?

My dim to-morrow — your plain to-day,
Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

So were it rightly, so shall it be!

Only, while earth we pace together
For the purpose apportioned you and me,
Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh "Wait for his sluggish
soul!

Shame he should lag, not lamed as I!"

May not I smile "Ungained her goal:

Body may reach her — by-and-by?"

A CAMEL-DRIVER.

"How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-
guide

Condemned" (Ferishtah questioned), "for
he slew

The merchant whom he convoyed with his
bales

— A special treachery?"

"Sir, the proofs were plain:
Justice was satisfied: between two boards

The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly
served."

"With all wise men's approval — mine at
least."

"Himself, indeed, confessed as much. 'I
die

Justly' (groaned he) 'through over-greedi-
ness

Which tempted me to rob: but grieve the
most

That he who quickened sin at slumber, —
ay,

Prompted and pestered me till thought
grew deed, —

The same is fled to Syria and is safe,
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.

My comfort is that God reserves for him
Hell's hottest' . . ."

"Idle words."

"Enlighten me!
Wherefore so idle? Punishment by man

Has thy assent, — the word is on thy lips.
By parity of reason, punishment

By God should likelier win thy thanks and
praise."

"Man acts as man must: God, as God
beseems.

A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
Thumps her athwart the muzzle; why?"

"How else
Instruct the creature — mouths should
munch, not bite?"

"True, he is man, knows but man's trick
to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting?"

"Find him such,
And fit the beast with understanding first!
No understanding animals like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master! Till they breed on
earth,
For teaching — blows must serve."

"Who deals the blow —
What if by some rare method, — magic,
say, —
He saw into the biter's very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice?"

"That's something: still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say 'No less
Take thy fault's due! Those long-necked
sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes — thwack!'"

"The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since, — ap-
parently
With patience, nay, approval: when the
jaws
Met? the small of the arm, 'Ha, Ladykin,
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold?' laughed he:
'Eat flesh? Rye-grass content thee rather
with,
Whereof accept a bundle!' Now, — what
change!
Laughter by no means! Now 'tis 'Fiend,
thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst judge?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i' the soft of thee!'"

"Behold? behold
A crazy noddle, rather! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed
out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. 'Could I take thy
mind,
Guess thy desire? If biting was offence
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each
day's
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee?
Thou endowed
With reason, truly!'"

"Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway,
whence
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer 40
below:
But ape omniscience? Nay! The ladder
lent
To climb by, step and step, until we reach
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
To mount on and thence guess the sun's
survey —
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
Stretched for the sun's descreying? Reason
bids
'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be, —
How else accomplish teaching?' Reason
adds
'Before man's First, and after man's poor 50
Last,
God operated and will operate.'
— Process of which man merely knows
this much, —
That nowise it resembles man's at all,
Teaching or punishing."

"It follows, then,
That any malefactor I would smite
With God's allowance, God himself will
spare
Presumably. No scapegrace? Then, re-
joice
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!"

"Friend, such view
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
Man lumps his kind i' the mass: God 60
singles thence
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist —
So think! — for certain: think the mass —
mankind —
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to
thee, —
Thee and no other, — stand or fall by
them!
That is the part for thee: regard all else
For what it may be — Time's illusion.
This
Be sure of — ignorance that sins, is safe.
No punishment like knowledge! Instance,
now!
My father's choicest treasure was a book 70
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
When I should grow to manhood. While
a child,
Coming upon the casket where it lay
Unguarded, — what did I but toss the
thing
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
Meaning no harm? So acts man three-
years old!
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,

But guilt was none to punish. Man
mature —

Each word of his I lightly held, each look
I turned from — wish that wished in vain
— nay, will

That willed and yet went all to waste —
'tis these

Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather
grant

Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
However near I stand in his regard,
So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their
help.

10 That I call Hell; why further punish-
ment?"

When I vexed you and you chid me,
And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me,
And confessed the blow well earned, —

My comfort all the while was
— Fault was faulty — near, not quite!
Do you wonder why the smile was?
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

30 But faults you ne'er suspected,
Nay, praised, no faults at all, —
Those would you had detected —
Crushed eggs whence snakes could
crawl!

TWO CAMELS.

QUOTH one: "Sir, solve a scruple! No
true sage

I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus:
'Wouldst thou be wise? Then mortify
thyself!

Baulk of its craving every bestial sense!
Say "If I relish melons — so do swine!
Horse, ass and mule consume their prov-
ender

Nor leave a pea-pod: fasting feeds the
soul."

30 Thus they admonish: while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor faltest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs — 'Well-saffroned was that
barley soup!

Can wisdom co-exist with — gorge-and-
swill,

I say not, — simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its
wont

This morning, and thou hast already
donned

Thy sheepskin over-garment: sure the sage

40 Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance

Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze?
I always thought, Sir" . . .

"Son," Ferishtah said,
"Truth ought to seem as never thought
before.

How if I give it birth in parable?
A neighbour owns two camels, beasts of
price

And promise, destined each to go, next
week,

Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce
To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and
drouth,

In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
Piled high with provender before the start.
Quoth this: 'My soul is set on winning
praise

From goodman lord and master, — hump
to hoof,

I dedicate me to his service. How?
Grass, purslane, lupines and I know not
what,

Crammed in my manger? Ha, I see — I
see!

No, master, spare thy money! I shall
trudge

The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.'

'Be magnified, O master, for the meal
So opportunely liberal!' quoth that.

'What use of strength in me but to sur-
mount

Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy
bales

No knee until I reach the glad bazaar?
Thus I do justice to thy fare: no sprig

Of toothsome chervil must I leave un-
chewed!

Too bitterly should I reproach myself
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar,

Remembering how the merest mouthful
more

Had heartened me to manage yet a mile!' —
And so it proved: the too-abstemious brute

Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the
thieves,

His carcass fed the vultures: not so he
The wisely thankful, who, good market-

drudge,
Let down his lading in the market-place,

No damage to a single pack. Which
beast,

Think ye, had praise and patting and a
brand

Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on 8
flank?

So, with thy squeamish scruple. What
imports

Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work,
dare

Refuse no help thereto, since help refused

Is hindrance sought and found. Win but
the race —
Who shall object 'He tossed three wine
cups off,
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips' ?
"More soberly, — consider this, my Son —
Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
Known by experience what enjoyment
means,
How shall I — share enjoyment? — no,
indeed! —
Supply it to my fellows, — ignorant,
As so I should be of the thing they crave,
How it affects them, works for good or ill.
Style my enjoyment self-indulgence —
sin —
Why should I labour to infect my kind
With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
Who else might neither catch nor give again
Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?
Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake?
That's joy
Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not
theirs?
Why, the physician called to help the sick,
Cries 'Let me, first of all, discard my
health!'
No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy
Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
Not in a vain endeavour not to know!
Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!
The Adversary said, — a Jew reports, —
החנם רא אוב אלהים
In Persian phrase, 'Does Job fear God for
nought?'
Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!
He nowise isolates himself and plays
The independent equal, owns no more
Than himself gave himself, so why thank
God?
A proper speech were this **מאלהים**
'Equals we are, Job, labour for thyself,
Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh
may,
Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure:
Beg of me nothing thou thyself mayst win
By work, or waive with magnanimity,
Since we are peers acknowledged, —
scarcely peers,
Had I implanted any want of thine
Only my power could meet and gratify.'
No: rather hear, at man's indifference —
'Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
To where I hold a seven-stringed instru-
ment,
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?'"
Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of pow-
der

— Simple dust it seemed — and half-
unstop a phial:
— Out dropped harmless dew. "Mixed 50
nothings make" — quoth he —
"Something!" So they did: a thunder-
clap, but louder —
Lightning-flash, but fiercer — put specta-
tors' nerves to trial:
Sure enough, we learned what was, imag-
ined what might be.

Had I no experience how a lip's mere trem-
ble,
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change
of colour,
These effect a heartquake, — how should
I conceive
What a heaven there may be? Let it but
resemble
Earth myself have known! No bliss
that's finer, fuller,
Only — bliss that lasts, they say, and fain
would I believe.

CHERRIES.

"WHAT, I disturb thee at thy morning- 60
meal:
Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace!
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
Yet — thanks, Sir, for thy leave to inter-
rupt" . . .
"Friend, I have finished my repast, thank
God!"

"There now, thy thanks for breaking fast
on fruit! —
Thanks being praise, or tantamount there-
to.
Prithee consider, have not things degree,
Lofty and low? Are things not great and
small,
Thence claiming praise and wonder more
or less?
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too, 70
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
With just this precept 'Never faith enough
In man as weakness, God as potency'?
When I would pay soul's tribute to that
same,
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
What are man's puny members and as
mean
Requirements weighed with Star-King
Mushtari?
There is the marvel!"

"Not to man — that's me.
List to what happened late, in fact or 80
dream.
A certain stranger, bound from far away,

Still the Shah's subject, found himself
before

Isfahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
He enters in the courts, will, if he may,
See so much glory as befits a slave
Who only comes, of mind to testify
How great and good is shown our lord the
Shah.

In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
Looks up and down, admires to heart's
content,

Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,

10 None says his reverence nay: peeps in at
each,

Wonders at all the unimagined use,
Gold here and jewels there, — so vast, that
hall —

So perfect yon pavilion! — lamps above
Bidding look up from luxuries below, —
Evermore wonder topping wonder, —
last —

Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
Plain o'er the entry: what, and he descries

20 Just those arrangements inside, — oh, the
care! —

Suited to soul and body both, — so snug
The cushion — nay, the pipe-stand fur-
nished so!

Whereat he cries aloud, — what think'st
thou, Friend?

'That these my slippers should be just my
choice,

Even to the colour that I most affect,
Is nothing: ah, that lamp, the central sun,
What must it light within its minaret
I scarce dare guess the good of! Who
lives there?

That let me wonder at, — no slipper-toys
30 Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks
them — thus!

"Never enough faith in omnipotence, —
Never too much, by parity, of faith
In impuissance, man's — which turns to
strength

When once acknowledged weakness every
way.

How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

"Two men once owed the Shah a mighty
sum,

Beggars they both were: this one crossed
his arms

And bowed his head, — 'whereof,' —
sighed he — 'each hair

Proved it a jewel: how the host's amount

40 Were idly strewed for payment at thy feet!

'Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and
scant!

All of the berries on my currant-bush,
What roots of garlic have escaped the
mice,

And some five pippins from the seedling
tree, —

Would they were half-a-dozen! anyho
Accept my all, poor beggar that I am!

'Received in full of all demands!' smil
back

The apportioner of every lot of ground
From inch to acre. Littleness of love
Befits the littleness of loving thing.

What if he boasted 'Seeing I am great
Great must my corresponding tribute be
Mushtari, — well, suppose him seven tim
seven

The sun's superior, proved so by son
sage:

Am I that sage? To me his twinkle bl
Is all I know of him and thank him for,

And therefore I have put the same
verse —

'Like yon blue twinkle, twink's thine ey
my Love!'

"Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuc
Because thy offering, — littleness itself, —
Is lessened by admixture sad and strang
Of mere man's-motives, — praise wi
fear, and love

With looking after that same love's rewar
Alas, Friend, what was free from th
alloy, —

Some smatch thereof, — in best and pure
love

Proffered thy earthly father? Dust the
art,

Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father too
The dust, and kindly called the handful -
gold,

Nor cared to count what sparkled here ar
there,

Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love
(Sum up thus) for the lowest favours fir
The commonest of comforts! aught besid
Very omnipotence had overlooked

Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
Nor waste thy power of love in wonde
ment

At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoile
By breath of word. That this last chem
soothes

A roughness of my palate, that I know:
His Maker knows why Mushtari wa
made."

Verse-making was least of my virtues:
viewed with despair

Wealth that never yet was but might be -
all that verse-making were

If the life would but lengthen to wish, l
the mind be laid bare.

So I said "To do little is bad, to do nothin
is worse" — And made verse.

Love-making, — how simple a matter
No depths to explore,

No heights in a life to ascend! No dis-
heartening Before,
No affrighting Hereafter, — love now will
be love evermore.
So I felt "To keep silence were folly:" —
all language above, I made love.

PLOT-CULTURE.

"Ay, but, Ferishtah," — a disciple
smirked, —
"That verse of thine 'How twink's thine
eye, my Love,
Blue as yon star-beam!' much arrides
myself
Who haply may obtain a kiss therewith
This eve from Laila where the palms
abound —
My youth, my warrant — so the palms be
close!
Suppose when thou art earnest in dis-
course
Concerning high and holy things, —
abrupt
I out with — 'Laila's lip, how honey-
sweet!' —
What say'st thou, were it scandalous or no?
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
For daring — prodigy of impudence —
Publish what, secret, were permissible.
Well, — one slide further in the imagined
slough, —
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy rever-
ence!) —
Suppose me well aware thy very self
Stooped prying through the palm-screen,
while I dared
Solace me with caressings all the same?
Uniterable, nay — unthinkable,
Undreamable a deed of shame! Alack,
How will it fare shouldst thou impress on
me
That certainly an Eye is over all
And each, to mark the minute's deed,
word, thought,
As worthy of reward or punishment?
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed
shame,
Broad daylight perpetration, — so to
speak, —
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,
With black night's help about me? Yet I
stand
A man, no monster, made of flesh not
cloud:
Why made so, if my making prove offence
To Maker's eye and ear?"

"Thou wouldst not stand
Distinctly Man," — Ferishtah made reply,
"Not the mere creature, — did no limit-
line

Round thee about, apportion thee thy
place
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable, —
Minuteness severed from immensity.
All of thee for the Maker, — for thyself, 46
Workings inside the circle that evolve
Thine all, — the product of thy cultured
plot.
So much of grain the ground's lord bids
thee yield
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn! spare
Daily intelligence of this manure,
That compost, how they tend to feed the
soil:
There thou art master sole and absolute
— Only, remember doomsday! Twitt'rs
thou me
Because I turn away my outraged nose
Shouldst thou obtrude thereon a shovelful 50
Of fertilising kisses? Since thy sire
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the
maid,
Enough! Be reticent, I counsel thee,
Nor venture to acquaint him, point by
point,
What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass —
Only from him expect acknowledgment
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-
bunch,
How much he loves the largess: of his love
I only tolerate so much as tells 60
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
The meal, that heartens him to do my
work,
Tickles his palate as I meant it should."

Not with my Soul, Love! — bid no Soul
like mine
Lap thee around nor leave the poor
Sense room!
Soul, — travel-worn, toil-weary, — would
confine
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow
and gloom,
Captures from soarings high and divings
deep.
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memo-
ries sleep?
Take Sense, too — let me love entire and 70
whole —
Not with my Soul!

Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes be-
tween,
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!
No past, no future — so thine arms but
screen
The present from surprise! not there,
'tis here —
Not then, 'tis now: — back, memories
that intrude!

Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll —
Sense quenching Soul!

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR.

"KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!" — groaned
whom that most grieved
As foolishlest of all the company.
"What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
— Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?"

- 10 "Friend," quoth Ferishtah, "all I seem to know
Is — I know nothing save that love I can
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
In youth with knowledge, — off, alas, crown slipped
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still
Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
— Knowledge, the golden? — lacquered ignorance!
As gain — mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,
20 We learn, — when what seemed ore assayed proves dross, —
Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
Clarified up to test of crucible.
The prize is in the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself:
Love — trust to! Be rewarded for the trust
In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,
30 Attainment — no delusion, whatsoe'er
The prize be: apprehended as a prize,
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping?
Joy
In shape and colour, — that was joy as true —
Worthy in its degree of love — as grasp
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.

What if he said the orange held no juice
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life
And sets man maundering of his misery,
That there's no meanest atom he obtains
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
'Hold here, — I have the whole thing, — know, this time,
Nor need search farther!' Whereas, strew his path
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops:
'This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks
For something more substantial.' Fool not thus
In practising with life and its delights!
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
The unknowable. Enough to say 'I feel
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
The love its cause behind, — I can and do!' Nor try to turn thy brain-power on the fact,
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now —
Its how and why; i' the future and elsewhere)
Except to — yet once more, and ever again,
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance:
Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
This — nigh upon revelation as it seemed
A minute since — defies thy longing looks,
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance!
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
And praise is love! Refine the same, contrive
An intellectual tribute — ignorance
Appreciating ere approbative
Of knowledge that is infinite? With us
The small, who use the knowledge of our kind
Greater than we, more wisely ignorance
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour;
What if the townsmen said 'Before we thank
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,

And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
On half a hundred more recondite points
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal!
Better they say 'How opportune the help!
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
Whom Hudhud taught, — the gracious spirit-bird, —
How to construct the pillar, teach the time!
So let us say — not 'Since we know, we love,'
But rather 'Since we love, we know enough.'
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
Mushtari in his courses? Added grace
Surely I count it that the sage devised,
Beside celestial service, ministry
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon
Falling as folk foresee. Once more then,
Friend —
(What ever in those careless ears of thine
Withal I needs must round thee) — knowledge doubt
Even wherein it seems demonstrable!
Love, — in the claim for love, that's gratitude
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt!
Pay its due tribute, — sure that pleasure is,
While knowledge may be, at the most.
See, now!
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God. —
'For love
Shown in the cherries' flavour? Consecrate
So petty an example?' There's the fault!
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
To unearh water: if first handful scooped
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging-down
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
The drouth that glues thy tongue, — what more would help
A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
When thou wouldst solace camels: in thy case,
Relish the drop and love the loveable!"

"And what may be unloveable?"

"Why, hate!
If out of sand comes sand and nought but sand
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, be-like,

Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
And worthiness to gain promotion, — hence,
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
Thy soul's environment of things perceived,
Things visible and things invisible,
Fact, fancy — all was purposed to evolve
This and this only — was thy wit of worth
To recognise the drop's use, love the same,
And loyally declare against mirage
Though all the world asseverated dust 50
Was good to drink? Say, 'what made moist my lip,
That I acknowledged moisture:' thou art saved!

"For why? The creature and creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well!
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored: love gains him by first leap.
Frankly accept the creatureship: ask good
To love for: press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence!
'So we offend?' Will it offend thyself 60
If, — impuissance praying potency, —
Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
Rise bright to-morrow — thou, he thinks supreme
In power and goodness, why shouldst thou refuse?
Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
Than that the boy cried 'Pluck Sitara'¹
down
And give her me to play with!' 'Tis for him
To have no bounds to his belief in thee: 70
For thee it also is to let her shine
Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him!"

Ask not one least word of praise!
Words declare your eyes are bright?
What then meant that summer day's
Silence spent in one long gaze?
Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek!
Face of you and form of you,
Did they find the praise so weak 80
When my lips just touched your cheek—
Touch which let my soul come through?

¹ In Persian means a star.

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING.

"Look, I strew beans" . . .

(Ferishtah, we premise,
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
Who put the peevisish question: "Sir, be
frank!
A good thing or a bad thing — Life is
which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out there: which force beats, I
ask?
If I pick beans from out a bushelful —
This one, this other, — then demand of
thee
What colour names each justly in the
main, —
10 'Black' I expect, and 'White' ensues
reply:
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash
Of either colour's opposite, intrudes
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
Substitute days, — show, ranged in order,
Life —
Then, tell me its true colour! Time is
short,
Life's days compose a span, — as brief be
speech!
Black I pronounce for, like the Indian
Sage, —
Black — present, past and future, inter-
spersed
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk
style Good
20 Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth
Black's shade on White is White too!
What's the worst
Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
The else-exempted present? — memory,
We call the plague! 'Nay, but our mem-
ory fades
And leaves the past unsullied!' Does it
so?
Why, straight the purpose of such breath-
ing-space,
Such respite from past ill, grows plain
enough!
What follows on remembrance of the past?
Fear of the future! Life, from birth to
death,
30 Means — either looking back on harm
escaped,
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black,
not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear! — nor
hope —
I'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide,
hope

Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
Man's might have been: I leave the conse-
quence
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause;
Such am not I: but, man — as man I
speak:
Black is the bean-throw: evil is the Life!")
"Look, I strew beans" — resumed Ferish-
tah — "beans
Blackish and whitish; what they figure
forth
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and
good,
That make up Life, — each moment when
he feels
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
Consciousness anyhow: there's stand the
first;
Whence next advance shall be from points
to line,
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
And moments to the Life. How look they
now,
Viewed in the large, those little joys and
griefs
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
— These which I strew? This bean was
white, this — black,
Set by itself, — but see if, good and bad
Each following either in companionship,
Black have not grown less black and white
less white,
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish —
grey,
And the whole line turns — well, or black
to thee
Or white belike to me — no matter which:
The main result is — both are modified
According to our eye's scope, power of
range
Before and after. Black dost call this
bean?
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which
— see —
Suffuses half its neighbour? — and, in
turn,
Lowers its pearliness late absolute,
Frowned upon by the jet which follows
hard —
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose
a joy!
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy
sense
Of sorrow which came after or might come.
Joy, sorrow, — by precedence, subse-
quence —
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
That's both and neither wholly: grey or
dun?
Dun thou decidest? grey prevails, say I:
Wherefore? Because my view is wide
enough,

- Reaches from first to last nor winks at all:
Motion achieves it: stop short — fast we stick, —
Probably at the bean that's blackest.
- “Since —
Son, trust me, — this I know and only this —
I am in motion, and all things beside
That circle round my passage through their midst, —
Motionless, these are, as regarding me:
— Which means, myself I solely recognise.
They too may recognise themselves, not me,
For aught I know or care: but plain they serve
This, if no other purpose — stuff to try
And test my power upon of raying light
And lending hue to all things as I go
Moonlike through vapour. Mark the flying orb!
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passed through,
This was and is and will be evermore
Coloured in permanence? The glory swims
Girdling the glory-river, swallowed straight
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
Behind as erst before the advancer: gloom?
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds
From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
And where's the gloom now? — silver-smitten straight,
One glow and variegation! So with me,
Who move and make, — myself, — the black, the white,
The good, the bad, of life's environment.
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there's white
Asserts supremacy: the motion's all
That colours me my moment: seen as joy?
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
Or might have been: as sorrow? — thence shall be
Escape as certain: white preceded black,
Black shall give way to white as duly, — so,
Deepest in black means white most imminent.
Stand still, — have no before, no after! — life
Proves death, existence grows impossible
To man like me. 'What else is blessed sleep
But death, then?' Why, a rapture of release
From toil, — that's sleep's approach: as certainly,
- The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er:
These round the blank unconsciousness between
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
Just through that blank's interposition.
Hence
The use of things external: man — that's I —
Practise thereon my power of casting light,
And calling substance, — when the light I cast
Breaks into colour, — by its proper name
— A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,
Names each bean taken from what lay so close
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
Seen in the passage past it, — pleasure prove
No mere delusion while I paused to look, —
Though what an idle fancy was that fear
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!
While how, again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects
Came of such causes. Passage at an end, —
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
Into a life-time, — like my bean-streak there,
Why, white they whirl into, not black — for me!”
- “Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,
Immeasurable miseries, here, there
And everywhere i' the world — world outside thine
Paled off so opportunely, — body's plague,
Torment of soul, — where's found thy fellowship
With wide humanity all round about
Reeling beneath its burden? What's despair?
Behold that man, that woman, child — 70
nay, brute!
Will any speck of white unblacken life
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now
from end to end
For him or her or it — who knows? Not I!”
- “Nor I, Ser.: 'It' shall stand for bird,
beast, fish,
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!
There's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:
Well, and his world's the palm-front
there he's born,

Lives, breeds and dies in that circumference,
 An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
 Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him!
 'To furnish these,' replies his wit: ask thine —
 Who see the heaven above, the earth below,
 Creation everywhere, — these, each and all
 Claim certain recognition from the tree
 For special service rendered branch and bole,
 Top-tuft and tap-root: — for thyself, thus seen,
 10 Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
 — Maybe, thatch huts with, — have another use
 Than strikes the aphid. So with me, my Son!
 I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
 What pleasures me or pains there: all outside —
 How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
 Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
 I pry beneath the semblance, — all that's fit,
 To practise with, — reach where the fact may lie
 Fathom-deep lower. There's the first and last
 20 Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
 Not mine! The aphid feeds, nor finds his leaf
 Untenable because a lance-thrust, nay,
 Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
 Where certain other aphids live and love.
 Restriction to his single inch of white,
 That's law for him, the aphid: but for me,
 The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
 Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
 All round about me: one such burst of black
 30 Intolerable o'er the life I count
 White in the main, and, yea — white's faintest trace
 Were clean abolished once and evermore.
 Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom
 So far as I discern: how far is that?
 God's care be God's! 'Tis mine — to boast no joy
 Unobeyed by such sorrows of my kind
 As sully with their shade my life that shines."
 "Reflected possibilities of pain,

Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself, —
 Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
 The general colour?"

"Here and there a touch
 Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things —
 That all about, external to myself,
 Was meant to be suspected, — not revealed
 Demonstrably a cheat, — but half seen through,
 Lest white should rule unchecked along the line:
 Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
 Of absolute and irretrievable
 And all-subduing black, — black's soul of black
 Beyond white's power to disintensify, —
 Of that I saw no sample: such may wreck
 My life and ruin my philosophy
 To-morrow, doubtless: hence the constant shade
 Cast on life's shine, — the tremor that intrudes
 When firmest seems my faith in white.
 Dost ask
 'Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
 From black experience? Why, if God be just,
 Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
 To undergo experience for his sake,
 Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
 In him might temper to the due degree
 Joy's else-excessive largess?' Why, indeed!
 Back are we brought thus to the starting-point —
 Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
 These stop my answer. Aphid that I am,
 How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
 Into my fellow's liberty of range,
 Enter into his sense of black and white,
 As either, seen by me from outside, seems
 Predominatingly the colour? Life,
 Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
 And myself live there? No — no more than pass
 From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
 Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
 Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
 Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
 Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
 Beat though he may unduly, that I know:
 How blood once curdled ever creeps again
 Baffles conjecture: yet since people live
 Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me.

Somehow provided for their sake must
 dawn
 Compensative resource. 'No sun, no
 grapes, —
 Then, no subsistence!' — were it wisely
 said?
 Or this well-reasoned — 'Do I dare feel
 warmth
 And please my palate here with Persia's
 vine,
 Though, over-mounts, — to trust the trav-
 eller, —
 Snow, feather thick, is falling while I
 feast?
 What if the cruel winter force his way
 Here also?' Son, the wise reply were
 this:
 When cold from over-mounts spikes
 through and through
 Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah, —
 then,
 Time to look out for shelter — time, at
 least,
 To wring the hands and cry 'No shelter
 serves!'
 Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
 Warrants that I despair to find."

"No less,
 Doctors have differed here; thou say'st
 thy say;
 Another man's experience masters thine,
 That controverted by the sourly-Sage,
 The Indian witness who, with faculty
 Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
 Chequer the world's predominating black,
 No good oust evil from supremacy,
 So that Life's best was that it led to death.
 How of his testimony?"

"Son, suppose
 My camel told me: 'Threescore days and
 ten
 I traversed hill and dale, yet never found
 Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my
 drouth;
 Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
 That to survive was found impossible!'
 Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving
 beast'
 (Reply were prompt), 'on flank this
 thwack of staff
 Nowise affecting flesh that's dead and dry!
 Thou wincest? Take correction twice,
 amend
 Next time thy nomenclature! Call
 white — white!'
 The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was
 death,
 Lived out his seventy years, looked hale,
 laughed loud,
 Liked — above all — his dinner, — lied,
 in short."

"Lied is a rough phrase: say he fell from
 truth
 In climbing towards it! — sure less faulty
 so
 Than had he sat him down and stayed 40
 content
 With thy safe orthodoxy, 'White, all
 white,
 White everywhere for certain I should see
 Did I but understand how white is black,
 As clearer sense than mine would.'
 Clearer sense, —
 Whose may that be? Mere human eyes I
 boast,
 And such distinguish colours in the main,
 However any tongue, that's human too,
 Please to report the matter. Dost thou
 blame
 A soul that strives but to see plain, speak
 true,
 Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for 50
 real,
 This emptiness which feigns solidity, —
 Ever some grey that's white, and dun
 that's black, —
 When shall we rest upon the thing itself
 Not on its semblance? — Soul — too
 weak, forsooth,
 To cope with fact — wants fiction every-
 where!
 Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!"

"Take one and try conclusions — this,
 suppose!
 God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful:
 truth?
 Take it and rest there. What is man?
 Not God:
 None of these absolutes therefore, — yet 60
 himself,
 A creature with a creature's qualities.
 Make them agree, these two conceptions!
 Each
 Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
 Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
 Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with
 Good,
 Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole
 Will,
 Doing a maker's pleasure — with results
 Which — call, the wide world over, 'what
 must be' —
 But, from man's point of view, and only
 point
 Possible to his powers, call — evidence 70
 Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock
 ourselves
 In all that's best of us, — man's blind but
 sure
 Craving for these in very deed not word,
 Reality and not illusion. Well, —
 Since these nowhere exist — nor there
 where cause

Must have effect, nor here where craving
means
Craving unfulfilled by fit consequence
And full supply, aye sought for, never
found —
These — what are they but man's own
rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognised by man,
Although by man unrealisable, —
Not God's with whom to will were to per-
form:
Nowise performed here, therefore never
willed.
What follows but that God, who could the
best,
-c Has willed the worst, — while man, with
power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme — provided . . .
here's the touch
That breaks the bubble . . . this con-
cept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart
and brain,
His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man
create?
No more than this my hand which strewed
the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source
prime
20 And ultimate, the single and the sole.”

“How reconcile discordancy, — unite
Notion and notion — God that only can
Yet does not, — man that would indeed
But just as surely cannot, — both in one?
What help occurs to thy intelligence?”

“Ah, the beans, — or, — example better
yet, —
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
The weaver plied his work with lengths of
silk
30 Dyed each to match some jewel as it
might,
And wove them, this by that. ‘How
comes it, friend,’ —
(Quoth I) — ‘that while, apart, this fiery
hue,
That watery dimness, either shocks the
eye,
So blinding bright, or else offends again
By dulness, — yet the two, set each by
each,
Somehow produce a colour born of both,
A medium profitable to the sight?’
‘Such medium is the end whereto I aim,’ —
Answered my craftsman: ‘there's no
single tinct
40 Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
The secret of the diamond: join extremes,

Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
The diamond's simulation. Even so
I needs must blend the quality of man
With quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life,
What is, what should be, — understand
thereby
Wherefore I hate the first and love the
last, —
Understand why things so present them-
selves
To me, placed here to prove I understand.
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to
end,
And binds me plain enough. By conse-
quence,
I bade thee tolerate, — not kick and cuff
The man who held that natures did in
fact
Blend so, since so thyself must have them
blend
In fancy, if it take a flight so far.”

“A power, confessed past knowledge, nay,
past thought,
— Thus thought thus known!”

“To know of, think about —
Is all man's sum of faculty effects
When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
What was, what is, what may such atom
be?
No answer! Still, what seems it to man's
sense?
An atom with some certain properties
Known about, thought of as occasion
needs,
— Man's — but occasions of the universe?
Unthinkable, unknowable to man.
Yet, since to think and know fire through
and through
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire un-
known,
Its uses — are they so unthinkable?
Pass from such obvious power to powers
unseen,
Undreamed of save in their sure conse-
quence:
Take that, we spoke of late, which draws
to ground
The staff my hand lets fall: it draws, at
least —
Thus much man thinks and knows, if
nothing more.”

“Ay, but man puts no mind into such
power!
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,
Nor prays it spare his pate while under-
neath.
Does he thank Summer though it plumped
the rind?
Why thank the other force — whate'er its
name —

Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue
to taste
And throat to let the pulp pass? Force
and force,
No end of forces! Have they mind like
man?"

"Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. 'Here
Come I to pay my due!' Whereat one
slave

Obeisquous spreads a carpet for thy foot,
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise
have they?

o Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
Goes past them to the Shah whose gra-
cious nod

Set all the sweet civility at work;
But for his ordinance, I much suspect,
My scholar had been left to cool his heels
Uncarpeted, or warm them—likelier still—
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
Needs must obey their master: 'force and
force,

No end of forces,' act as bids some force
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that
one?

20 How recognise him? Simply as thou
didst

The Shah,—by reasoning 'Since I feel a
debt,

Behoves me pay the same to one aware
I have my duty, he his privilege.'

Didst thou expect the slave who charged
thy pipe

Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
And save thee further trouble?"

"Be it so!

The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me — somewhere must be some-
body

Ready to take his due. All comes to this—

30 Where due is, there acceptance follows:
find

Him who accepts the due! and why look
far?

Behold thy kindred compass thee about!
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt
die,

Heroic man stands forth as Shahan-Shah.
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest,
How come they short of lordship that's to
seek

Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's
match,

Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth
lasts

40 Such heroes shall abound there — all for
thee

Who profitest by all the present, past,
And future operation of thy race.

Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of
thanks,

Look wistful for some hand from out the
clouds

To take it, when, all round, a multitude
Would ease thee in a trice?"

"Such tendered thanks

Would tumble back to who craved rid-
dance, Son!

— Who but my sorry self? See! stars are
out —

Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze be-
neath,

Go glorying, and glorify thee too 50

— Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty,
weird Parwin!

Whether shall love and praise to stars be
paid

Or — say — some Mubid who, for good
to thee

Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless

sight,
Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm

Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he
went

Thou wakedst: 'What a novel sense have
I!

Whom shall I love and praise?' 'The
stars, each orb

Thou standest rapt beneath,' proposes 60
one:

'Do not they live their life, and please
themselves,

And so please thee? What more is requi-
site?'

Make thou this answer: 'If indeed no
mage

Opened my eyes and worked a miracle,
Then let the stars thank me who appre-
hend

That such an one is white, such other blue!
But for my apprehension both were blank.

Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
Make whites and blues, conceive without

stars' help,
New qualities of colour? were my sight 70

Lost or misleading, would yon red — I
judge

A ruby's benefaction — stand for aught
But green from vulgar glass? Myself ap-
praise

Lustre and lustre; should I overlook
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,

Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he
trusts

No more than I trust mine? My mage for
me!

I never saw him: if he never was,
I am the arbitrator! No, my Son!

Let us sink down to thy similitude: 80

I eat my apple, relish what is ripe —
The sunny side, admire its rarity

Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the
rest

Hide commonly a maggot in the core, —
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack
of lips:

But — thank an apple? He who made
my mouth

To masticate, my palate to approve,
My maw to further the concoction — Him
I thank, — but for whose work, the or-
chard's wealth

Might prove so many gall-nuts — stocks or
stones

For aught that I should think, or know, or
care."

10 "Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled,
"should thanks

Go to this work of mine? If worthy
praise,

Praised let it be and welcome: as verse
ranks,

So rate my verse: if good therein out-
weighs

Aught faulty judged, judge justly!
Justice says:

Be just to fact, or blaming or approving:
But — generous? No, nor loving!

"Loving! what claim to love has work of
mine?

Concede my life were emptied of its
gains

To furnish forth and fill work's strict con-
fide,

20 Who works so for the world's sake —
he complains

With cause when hate, not love, rewards
his pains.

I looked beyond the world for truth and
beauty:

Sought, found and did my duty."

EPILOGUE.

OH, Love — no, Love! All the noise be-
low, Love,

Groanings all and moanings — none of
Life I lose!

All of Life's a cry just of weariness and
woe, Love —

"Hear at least, thou happy one!" How
can I, Love, but choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round
me

— Much as when the moon's might frees
a space from cloud —

Iridescent splendours: gloom — would
else confound me —

Barrièred off and banished far — bright-
edged the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose
are they, the faces

Faint revealed yet sure divined, the
famous ones of old?

"What" — they smile — "our names,
our deeds so soon erases

Time upon his tablet where Life's glory
lies enrolled?

"Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe
and mumming,

So we battled it like men, not boylike
sulked or whined?

Each of us heard clang God's 'Come!'
and each was coming:

Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks
to lag behind!

"How of the field's fortune? That con-
cerned our Leader!

Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for
doings left and right:

Each as on his sole head, failer or suc-
ceeder,

Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care
for cowards: fight!"

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning
earth that's under,

Wide our world displays its worth man's
strife and strife's success:

All the good and beauty, wonder crowning
wonder,

Till my heart and soul applaud per-
fection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph,
terror

Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill
wind disencharms

All the late enchantment! What if all be
error —

If the halo irised round my head were,
Love, thine arms?

PALAZZO GIUSTINIAN-RECANATI,
VENICE: December 1, 1883.

PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY:

TO WIT:

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE, DANIEL BARTOLI, CHRISTOPHER SMART, GEORGE
BUBB DODINGTON, FRANCIS FURINI, GERARD DE LAIRESSE AND CHARLES
AVISON.

INTRODUCED BY

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN APOLLO AND THE FATES;

CONCLUDED BY

ANOTHER BETWEEN JOHN FUST AND HIS FRIENDS.

1887.

IN MEMORIAM J. MILSAND, OBIT IV. SEPT. MDCCCLXXXVI.

Absens absentem auditque videtque.

APOLLO AND THE FATES.

A PROLOGUE.

(Hymn. in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693-4, 697-8. Alcestit, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO. [*From above.*]

FLAME at my footfall, Parnassus! Apollo,
Breaking a-blaze on thy topmost peak,
Burns thence, down to the depths —
dread hollow —

Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste! They
wreak

Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

THE FATES. [*Below. Darkness.*]

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our
Mother,
Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core,
Night!

Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,
Deal to each mortal his dole of light
On earth — the upper, the glad, the bright.

CLOTHO.

Even so: thus from my loaded spindle
Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo,
"Birth"

Brays from my bronze lip: life I kindle:
Look, 'tis a man! go, measure on
earth

The minute thy portion, whatever its
worth!

LACHESIS.

Woe-purged, weal-prankt, — if it speed,
if it linger, —

Life's substance and show are deter-
mined by me,

Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb
and finger,

Lead life the due length: is all smooth-
ness and glee,

All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my ~~so~~
decree!

ATROPOS.

— Which I make an end of: the smooth
as the tangled

My shears cut asunder: each snap
shrieks "One more

Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who
dangled

The puppet grotesquely tilt earth's
solid floor

Proved firm he fell through, lost in Nought
as before."

CLOTHO.

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus!
Produce him!

LACHESIS.

Go, — brave, wise, good, happy! Now
chequer the thread!

He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I
unloose him

A goddess-sent plague. He has con-
quered, is wed,

Men crown him, he stands at the height, — ~~30~~

ATROPOS.

He is . . .

APOLLO: [*Entering: Light.*
"Dead?"

Nay, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
Making and marring the fortunes of
Man?

Huddling — no marvel, your enemy eyes
you —

Head by head bat-like, blots under the
ban

Of daylight earth's blessing since time
began!

THE FATES.

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo!

Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy
beams

Earth to the centre, — spare but this hol-
low

10 Hewn out of Night's heart, where our
mystery seems

Mewed from day's malice: wake earth
from her dreams!

APOLLO.

Crones, 'tis your dusk selves I startle from
slumber:

Day's god deposes you — queens Night-
crowned!

— Plying your trade in a world ye en-
cumber,

Fashioning Man's web of life — spun,
wound,

Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the
ground!

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amuse-
ment —

Annulled by a sunbeam!

THE FATES.

Boy, are not we peers?

APOLLO.

You with the spindle grant birth: whose
inducement

20 But yours — with the niggardly digits
— endears

To mankind chance and change, good
and evil? Your shears . . .

ATROPOS.

Ay, mine end the conflict: so much is no
fable.

We spin, draw to length, cut asunder:
what then?

So it was, and so is, and so shall be: art
able

To alter life's law for ephemeral men?

APOLLO.

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and
ten

Extend but the years of Admetus! Dis-
aster

O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I
became

A servant to one who forbore me though
master:

True lovers were we. Discontinue your
game,

Let him live whom I loved, then hate on,
all the same!

THE FATES.

And what if we granted — law-flouter,
use-trampler —

His life at the suit of an upstart?
Judge, thou —

Of joy were it fuller, of span because
ampler?

For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus
— ay, now —

Not a grey hair on head, nor a wrinkle
on brow!

For, boy, 'tis illusion: from thee comes a
glimmer

Transforming to beauty life blank at the
best.

Withdraw — and how looks life at worst,
when to shimmer

Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's
lot frowns — confessed

Mere blackness chance-brightened?
Whereof shall attest

The truth this same mortal, the darling
thou stylest,

Whom love would advantage, — eke
out, day by day,

A life which 'tis solely thyself reconcil-
est

Thy friend to endure, — life with hope:
take away

Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it.
For, say —

What's infancy? Ignorance, idleness,
mischief:

Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness,
greed:

Age — impotence, churlishness, rancour:
call *this* chief

Of boons for thy loved one? Much
rather bid speed

Our function, let live whom thou hatest
indeed!

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing! Our
eld be instructive!

APOLLO.

And certes youth owns the experience of age.

Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are productive

— They solely — of good that's mere semblance, engage

Man's eye — gilding evil, Man's true heritage?

THE FATES.

So, even so! From without, — at due distance

If viewed, — set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays, —

Life mimics the sun: but withdraw such assistance,

The counterfeit goes, the reality stays —

An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

APOLLO.

What craze

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him

As happy?

THE FATES.

Man happy?

APOLLO.

If otherwise — solve

This doubt which besets me! What friend ever greets him

Except with "Live long as the seasons revolve,"

Not "Death to thee straightway"?

Your doctrines absolve

Such hailing from hatred: yet Man should know best.

He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load

Man fain would be rid of: when put to the test,

He whines "Let it lie, leave me trudging the road

That is rugged so far, but methinks . . ."

THE FATES.

Ay, 'tis owed

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him "Once past

The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of sward

Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last" —

Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward

Of the labour and sorrow.

APOLLO.

It seems, then — debarred

Of illusion — (I needs must acknowledge the plea)

Man desponds and despairs. Yet, — still further to draw

Due profit from counsel, — suppose there should be

Some power in himself, some compensative law

By virtue of which, independently . . .

THE FATES.

Faugh!

Strength hid in the weakling!

30

What bowl-shape hast there,

Thus laughingly proffered? A gift to our shrine?

Thanks — worsted in argument! Not so? Declare

Its purpose!

APOLLO.

I proffer earth's product, not mine.

Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of — WINE!

THE FATES.

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO.

Sustenance meagre!

Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things amiss.

Quaff wine, — how the spirits rise nimble and eager,

Unscale the dim eyes! To Man's cup grant one kiss

Of your lip, then allow — no enchantment like this!

CLOTHO.

Unhook wings, unhood brows! Dost ⁴⁰ hearken?

LACHESIS.

I listen:

I see — smell the food these fond mortals prefer

To our feast, the bee's bounty!

ATROPOS.

The thing leaps! But — glisten

Its best, I withstand it — unless all concur

In adventure so novel.

APOLLO.

Ye drink?

THE FATES.

We demur.

APOLLO.

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contrivance

Of Man — Bacchus-prompted! The
 juice, I uphold,
 Illuminates gloom without sunny con-
 nivance,
 Turns fear into hope and makes coward-
 ice bold, —
 Touching all that is leadlike in life turns
 it gold!

THE FATES.

Faith foolish as false!

APOLLO.

But essay it, soft sisters!
 Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice
 to lip!
 Good: thou next — and thou! Seems
 the web, to you twisters
 Of life's yarn, so worthless?

CLOTHO.

Who guessed that one sip
 Would impart such a lightness of limb?

LACHESIS.

I could skip

10 In a trice from the pied to the plain in my
 woof!

What parts each from either? A hair's
 breadth, no inch.

Once learn the right method of stepping
 aloof,

Though on black next foot falls, firm
 I fix it, nor flinch,

— Such my trust white succeeds!

ATROPOS.

One could live — at a pinch!

APOLLO.

What beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's
 skill, can effect

Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the
 relation

Of evil to good? But drink deeper, cor-
 rect

Bear sight more convincingly still!
 Take your station

Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edi-
 fication!

20 Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not
 me but my brother,

Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of god-
 ships. 'Twas he

Found all boons to all men, by one god or
 other

Already conceded, so judged there
 must be

New guerdon to grace the new advent,
 you see!

Else how would a claim to Man's homage
 arise?

The plan lay arranged of his mixed woe
 and weal,

So disposed — such Zeus' will — with
 design to make wise

The witless — that false things were
 mingled with real,

Good with bad: such the lot whereto law
 set the seal.

Now, human of instinct — since Semele's
 son,

Yet minded divinely — since fathered
 by Zeus,

With nought Bacchus tampered, undid
 not things done,

Owned wisdom anterior, would spare
 wont and use,

Yet change — without shock to old rule —
 introduce.

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to
 base

Frowns sheer, height and depth ada-
 mantine, one death!

I rouse with a beam the whole rampart,
 displace

No splinter — yet see how my flam-
 beau, beneath

And above, bids this gem wink, that
 crystal unsheath!

Withdraw beam — disclosure once more
 Night forbids you

Of spangle and sparkle — Day's chance-
 gift, surmised

Rock's permanent birthright: my potency
 rids you

No longer of darkness, yet light — re-
 cognised —

Proves darkness a mask: day lives on
 though disguised.

If Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
 Your sense, that life's fact grows from

adverse and thwart

To helpful and kindly Ly means of a
 cluster —

Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature
 sublimed by Man's art —

Shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus
 has no part?

Zeus — wisdom anterior? No, maids, be
 admonished!

If morn's touch at base worked such
 wonders, much more

Had noontide in absolute glory astonished
 Your den, filled atop to o'erflowing.

I pour

No such mad confusion. 'Tis Man's to
 explore

Up and down, inch by inch, with the taper
his reason:

No torch, it suffices — held deftly and
straight.

Eyes, purblind at first, feel their way in
due season,

Accept good with bad, till unseemly
debate

Turns concord — despair, acquiescence
in fate.

Who works this but Zeus? Are not in-
stinct and impulse,

Not concept and incept his work through
Man's soul

On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it
reach brain must brim pulse,

Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds
body to goal,

Bids pause at no part but press on, reach
the whole.

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage
When — (quaff away, cummers!) —

ye view, last and first,

As evil Man's earthly existence. Come!

Is age,

*Is infancy — manhood — so uninter-
spersed*

With good — some faint sprinkle?

CLOTHO.

I'd speak if I durst.

APOLLO.

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS.

I'd see, did no web

Set eyes somehow winking.

APOLLO.

Drains-deep lies their purge

— True collyrium!

ATROPOS.

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb
From starved ears.

APOLLO.

Drink but down to

the source, they resurge.

Join hands! Yours and yours too!

A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS.

Quashed be our quarrel! Sourly and
smilingly,

Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and
browned,

Drive we a dance, three and one, recon-
cilingly,

Thanks to the cup where dissension is
drowned,

Defeat proves triumphant and slavery
crowned.

Infancy? What if the rose-streak of
morning

Pale and depart in a passion of tears?

Once to have hoped is no matter for scorn-
ing!

Love once — e'en love's disappoint-
ment endears!

A minute's success pays the failure of 34
years.

Manhood — the actual? Nay, praise the
potential!

(Bound upon bound, foot it around!)

What *is*? No, what *may* be — sing!
that's Man's essential!

(Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound

Fancy with fact — the lost secret is found!)

Age? Why, fear ends there: the contest
concluded,

Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the
fray:

Not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow
eluded

Each blow fortune dealt him, and con-
quers to-day:

To-morrow — new chance and fresh 40
strength, — might we say?

Laud then Man's life — no defeat but a
triumph!

[*Explosion from the earth's centre.*

CLOTHO.

Ha, loose hands!

LACHESIS.

I reel in a swoond.

ATROPOS.

Horror yawns under me, while from on
high — humph!

Lightnings astound, thunders resound,
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the

ground! [*Silence.*

APOLLO.

I acknowledge.

THE FATES.

Hence, trickster! Straight
sobered are we!

The portent assures 'twas our tongue
spoke the truth,

Not thine. While the vapour encom-
passed us three

We conceived and bore knowledge — a
bantling uncouth,

Old brains shudder back from: so — take
it, rash youth!

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes!

APOLLO.

I hear.

THE FATES.

Dumb music, dead eloquence! Say it,
or sing!

What was quickened in us and thee also?

APOLLO.

I fear.

THE FATES.

Half female, half male — go, ambigu-
ous thing!

While we speak — perchance sputter —
pick up what we fling!

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor un-
guessed,

10 Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive
to declare

What is ill, what is good in our spinning?
Worst, best,

Change hues of a sudden: now here
and now there

Flits the sign which decides: all about yet
nowhere.

'Tis willed so, — that Man's life be lived,
first to last,

Up and down, through and through, —
not in portions, forsooth,

To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles
fly fast,

Weave living, not life sole and whole:
as age — youth,

So death completes living, shows life in its
truth.

Man learningly lives: till death helps him
— no lore!

20 It is doom and must be. Dost sub-
mit?

APOLLO.

I assent —

Concede but Admetus! So much if no
more

Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge!
Be gracious though, blent,

Good and ill, love and hate streak your
life-gift!

THE FATES.

Content!

Such boon we accord in due measure.
Life's term

We lengthen should any be moved for
love's sake

To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the
germ

Fruit mature — bliss or woe — either in-
finite. Take

Or leave thy friend's lot: on his head be the
stake!

APOLLO.

On mine, griesly gammers! Admetus, I
know thee!

Thou prizest the right these unwittingly
give

Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they
owe thee!

Importunate one with another they
strive

For the glory to die that their king may
survive.

Friends rush: and who first in all Phæ-
æ appears

But thy father to serve as thy substitute?

CLOTHO.

Bah!

APOLLO.

Ye wince? Then his mother, well-
stricken in years,

Advances her claim — or his wife —

LACHESIS.

Tra-la-la!

APOLLO.

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies!

ATROPOS.

Ha, ha, ha!

[*Apollo ascends. Darkness.*]

WITH BERNARD DE MANDE- VILLE.

[For an account of this celebrated writer see "Dictionary of National Biography," vol. xxxvi. His famous paradox, "private vices public benefits," excited the utmost fury; and his best-known book, "The Fable of the Bees," was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. It contains passages of great eloquence and unrivalled sarcasm, and is well worth reading.]

I.

Av, this same midnight, by this chair of
mine,

Come and review thy counsels: art thou
still

Staunch to their teaching? — not as fools
opine

Its purport might be, but as subtler skill

Could, through turbidity, the loaded line
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine
And recognised harmoniously combine
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph
— thine,
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville!

II.

Only, 'tis no fresh knowledge that I crave,
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave;
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn
10 To what account Man may Man's portion, learn
Man's proper play with truth in part, before
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more
Than smiling witness that I do my best
With doubtful doctrine: afterward the rest!
So, silent face me while I think and speak!
A full disclosure? Such would outrage law.
Law deals the same with soul and body: seek
Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw
A new-born weakling, starts up strong — not weak —
20 Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,
Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak
Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,
As mind bids muscle — mind which long has striven,
Painfully urging body's impotence
To effort whereby — once law's barrier riven,
Life's rule abolished — body might dispense
With infancy's probation, straight be given
— Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-driven,
Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when shriven —
30 To stand full-statured in magnificence.

III.

No: as with body so deals law with soul
That's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
Presumably: so far I understood
Thy teaching long ago. But what means this
— Objected by a mouth which yesterday
Was magisterial in antithesis
To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,

Though tremblingly the while? "No sign" — groaned he —
"No stirring of God's finger to denote 46
He wills that right should have supremacy
On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote
But one poor instance when he interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim, closed
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!
So might we safely mock at what unnerves
Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's 50
increase
That haply evil's strife with good shall cease
Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace
Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves
With scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves
From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke
Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke —
Death should loose man from — fresh laid, past release?"

IV.

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me
This parlous friend who captured or set free
Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would 60 draw
Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw
Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked
Out of his pathway if the object risked
Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe!
As when folk heard thee in old days pooh-pooh
Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend —
(Whose groan I hear, with guffaw at the end
Disposing of mock-melancholy) — grant
His bilious mood one potion, ministrant
Of homely wisdom, healthy wit! For, 70 hear!
"With power and will, let preference appear
By intervention ever and aye, help good
When evil's mastery is understood
In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong
Tramples weak right to nothingness: nay, long
Ere such sad consummation brings despair

To right's adherents, ah, what help it were
 If wrong lay strangled in the birth — each
 head
 Of the hatched monster promptly crushed,
 instead
 Of spared to gather venom! We require
 No great experience that the inch-long
 worm,
 Free of our heel, would grow to vomit
 fire,
 And one day plague the world in dragon
 form.
 So should wrong merely peep abroad to
 meet
 Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's
 way safe
 10 For honest walking."

v.

Sage, once more repeat
 Instruction! 'Tis a sore to soothe not
 chafe.
 Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive
 To coax from thee another "Grumbling
 Hive"!
 My friend himself wrote fables short and
 sweet:
 Ask him — "Suppose the Gardener of
 Man's ground
 Plants for a purpose, side by side with
 good,
 Evil — (and that he does so — look
 around!
 What does the field show?) — were it
 understood
 That purposely the noxious plant was
 found
 20 Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food,
 If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk
 And leaflet-promise, quick his spud should
 baulk
 Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?
 Such timely treatment of the offending
 root
 Might strike the simple as wise husbandry,
 But swift sure extirpation scarce would
 suit
 Shrewder observers. Seed once sown
 thrives: why
 Frustrate its product, miss the quality
 Which sower binds himself to count upon?
 30 Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose,
 gone
 Unhindered up to harvest — what know I
 But proof were gained that every growth
 of good
 Sprang consequent on evil's neighbour-
 hood?"
 So said your shrewdness: true — so did
 not say
 That other sort of theorists who held
 Mere unintelligence prepared the way
 For either seed's upsprouting: you re-
 pelled

Their notion that both kinds could sow
 themselves.
 True! but admit 'tis understanding delves
 And drops each germ, what else but folly 40
 thwarts
 The doer's settled purpose? Let the sage
 Concede a use to evil, though there starts
 Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage
 With thumb and finger lest it spoil the
 yield
 Too much of good's main tribute! But
 our main
 Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster —
 purge the field
 Of him for once and all? It follows plain
 Who set him there to grow beholds re-
 pealed
 His primal law: his ordinance proves
 vain:
 And what beseems a king who cannot 50
 reign,
 But to drop sceptre valid arm should
 wield?

vi.

"Still there's a parable" — retorts my
 friend —
 "Shows agriculture with a difference!
 What of the crop and weeds which solely
 blend
 Because, once planted, none may pluck
 them thence?
 The Gardener contrived thus? Vain
 pretence!
 An enemy it was who unawares
 Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.
 Where's our desiderated forethought?
 Where's
 Knowledge, where power and will in evi- 60
 dence
 'Tis Man's-play merely! Craft foils recti-
 tude,
 Malignity defeats beneficence.
 And grant, at very last of all, the feud
 'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts
 intrude
 Though good be garnered safely and
 good's foe
 Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal:
 'even so —
 Why grant tares leave to thus o'erter-
 o'ertower
 Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt
 the flower,
 Triumph one sunny minute? Knowledge,
 power
 And will thus worked? Man's fancy 70
 makes the fault!
 Man, with the narrow mind, must cram
 inside
 His finite God's infinitude, — earth's
 vault
 He bids comprise the heavenly far and
 wide,

Since Man may claim a right to understand

What passes understanding. So, succinct
And trimly set in order, to be scanned
And scrutinised, lo—the divine lies
linked

Fast to the human, free to move as
moves

Its proper match: awhile they keep the
grooves,

Discreetly side by side together pace,
Till sudden comes a stumble incident
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,

o And he discovers — wings in rudiment,
Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-
distent

Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while
pent

Within humanity's restricted space.
Abjure each fond attempt to represent
The formless, the illimitable! Trace
No outline, try no hint of human face
Or form or hand!"

VII.

Friend, here's a tracing meant
To help a guess at truth you never
knew.

Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye
too,

so And note — sufficient for all purposes —
The ground-plan — map you long have
yearned for — yes,

Made out in markings — more what artist
can? —

Goethe's Estate in Weimar, — just a plan!
A. is the House, and B. the Garden-gate,
And C. the Grass-plot — you've the whole
estate

Letter by letter, down to Y. the Pond,
And Z. the Pig-stye. Do you look beyond
The algebraic signs, and captious say

"Is A. the House? But where's the Roof
to A.,

so Where's Door, where's Window? Needs
must House have such!"

Ay, that were folly. Why so very much
More foolish than our mortal purblind
way

Of seeking in the symbol no mere point
To guide our gaze through what were else
inane,

But things — their solid selves? "Is,
joint by joint,

Orion man-like, — as these dots explain
His constellation? Flesh composed of
suns —

How can such be?" exclaim the simple
ones.

Look through the sign to the thing sig-
nified —

! Shown nowise, point by point at best
descried,

Each an orb's topmost sparkle: all beside

Its shine is shadow: turn the orb one
jot —

Up flies the new flash to reveal 'twas not
The whole sphere late flamboyant in your
ken!

VIII.

"What need of symbolising? Fitlier men
Would take on tongue mere facts — few,
faint and far,

Still facts not fancies: quite enough they
are,

That Power, that Knowledge, and that
Will, — add then

Immensity, Eternity: these jar
Nowise with our permitted thought and 50
speech.

Why human attributes?"

A myth may teach:

Only, who better would expound it thus
Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

IX.

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense
and dark,

Embattled crags and clouds, outbroke the
Sun

Above the conscious earth, and one by one
Her heights and depths absorbed to the
last spark

His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
Of mountain-granite which, transformed

to gold,
Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's 60
dusk fold

On fold of vapour-swathing, like a bridge
Shattered beneath some giant's stamp.

Night wist
Her work done and betook herself in mist

To marsh and hollow there to bide her
time

Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace

sublime
Thrilling her to the heart of things: since

there
No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straight-

way grew
Glad through the inrush — glad nor more 70
nor less

Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilder-
ness,

Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch
and spread,

The universal world of creatures bred
By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise —

All creatures but one only: gaze for gaze,
Joyless and thankless, who — all scowling

can —
Protests against the innumerable praises? 90
Man,

Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state
Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved — discon-
solate —
While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
And glad acknowledges the bounteous
day!

X.

Man speaks now: "What avails Sun's
earth-felt thrill
To me? Sun penetrates the ore, the
plant —
They feel and grow: perchance with
subtler skill
He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until
Each favoured object pays life's minis-
trant
10 By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself im-
bited
Such influence also, stood and stand com-
plete —
The perfect Man, — head, body, hands
and feet,
True to the pattern: but does that suffice?
How of my superadded mind which needs
— Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For — more than knowledge that by some
device
Sun quickens matter: mind is nobly fain
20 To realise the marvel, make — for sense
As mind — the unseen visible, condense
— Myself — Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak in-
crease
His corrugated strength on strength, the
palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and
balm, —
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated
peace, —
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying, —
30 The lion lord it by the desert-spring, —
What know or care they of the power
which pricked
Nothingness to perfection? I, instead,
When all-developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete: for what though flesh had
force
Transcending theirs — hands able to un-
ring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could
outcourse
The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the
king
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind
seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
40 The outside mind — whose quickening I
attain
To recognise — I only. All in vain

Would mind address itself to render plain
The nature of the essence. Drag what
lurks
Behind the operation — that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof —
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No!
aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my
will
Should operate — myself for once have
skill
To realise the energy which streams
5 Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath — why mocks that mind my own
thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows
dark,
To half-surmise — were Sun's use under-
stood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant
one spark
Myself may deal with — make it thaw
my blood
And prompt my steps were truer to the
mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-sur-
mise
That somehow secretly is operant
6 A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more — no idle
vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!'
Mysteries
At source why probe into? Enough: dis-
play,
Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all's
informed
Equally by Sun's efflux! — source from
whence
If just one spark I drew, full evidence
Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned —
Sun's self made palpable to Man!"
7

XI.

Thus moaned
Man till Prometheus helped him, — as
we learn, —
Offered an artifice whereby he drew
Sun's rays into a focus, — plain and true,
The very Sun in little: made fire burn
And henceforth do Man service — glass-
conglobed
Though to a pin-point circle — all the
same
Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun dis-
robed
Of that else-unconceived essential flame
Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's
eye strive
Achingly to companion as it may
8

The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
To follow beam and beam upon their way
Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense
faint — confessed

Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
Infinitude of action? Idle quest!

Rather ask aid from optics. Sense,
descri

The spectrum — mind, infer immensity!
Little? In little, light, warmth, life are
blessed —

Which, in the large, who sees to bless?
Not I

More than yourself: so, good my friend,
keep still

Trustful with — me? with thee, sage
Mandeville!

WITH DANIEL BARTOLI.¹

[Born at Ferrara, 1608; died at Rome,
1685. Rector of the College of Jesuits at
Rome. He wrote a history of the Jesuits,
and various treatises on physics.]

I.

DON, the divinest women that have walked
Our world were scarce those saints of
whom we talked.

My saint, for instance — worship if you
will!

'Tis pity poets need historians' skill:
What legendary's worth a chronicle?

II.

Come, now! A great lord once upon a
time

Visited — oh a king, of kings the prime,
To sign a treaty such as never was:

For the king's minister had brought to pass
That this same duke — so style him —
must engage

Two of his dukedoms as an heritage
After his death to this exorbitant
Craver of kingship. "Let who lacks go
scant,

Who owns much, give the more to!"
Why rebuke?

So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

III.

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house
— Duchess herself — indeed the very
spouse

¹ A learned and ingenious writer. "Fu
Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia; onde scrisse
lungheissime storie, le quali sarebbero lette se
non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le super-
stizioni . . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti
miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile
a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie; e anche
a me, non mi bastò l'animo di proseguire molto
avanti." — *Angelo Cerutti*. (R. B.)

Of the king's uncle, — while the deed of
gift

Whereby our duke should cut his rights ³
adrift

Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and
seal —

What does the frozen heart but uncongeal
And, shaming his transcendent kin and
kith,

Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaint-
ance with?

A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder
be?"

"Nobody! Good as beautiful is she,
With gifts that match her goodness, no
faint flaw

I' the white: she were the pearl you think
you saw,

But that she is — what corresponds to
white?

Some other stone, the true pearl's op- ⁴⁰
posite,

As cheap as pearls are costly. She's —
now, guess

Her parentage! Once — twice — thrice?
Foiled, confess!

Drugs, duke, her father deals in — faugh,
the scents! —

Manna and senna — such medicaments
For payment he compounds you. Stay
— stay — stay!

I'll have no rude speech wrong her!
Whither away,

The hot-head? Ah, the scapegrace!
She deserves

Respect — compassion, rather! Right it
serves

My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!
Already at it, is he? She keeps cool — ⁵⁰

Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our
state atones

For thus much licence, and words break
no bones!"

(Hearts, though, sometimes.)

IV.

Next morn 'twas "Reason, rate,
Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as
fate,

I wed that woman — what a woman is
Now that I know, who never knew till
this!"

So swore the duke. "I wed her: once
again —

Rave, rate, and reason — spend your
breath in vain!"

V.

At once was made a contract firm and
fast,

Published the bauns were, only marriage, ⁶⁰
last,

Required completion when the Church's
rite

Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite
 The coupled man and wife for evermore:
 Which rite was soon to follow. Just before —
 All things at all but end — the folk o' the bride
 Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied:
 "Of ceremony — so much as empowers,
 Nought that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours —"
 He smiled — "all else were mere futility.
 We vow, God hears us: God and you and I —
 10 Let the world keep at distance! This is why
 We choose the simplest forms that serve to bind
 Lover and lover of the human kind,
 No care of what degree — of kings or clowns —
 Come bloom and breeding. Courtly smiles and frowns
 Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike
 My style and yours — in one style merged alike —
 God's man and woman merely. Long ago
 'Twas rounded in my ears 'Duke, wherefore slow
 To use a privilege? Needs must one who reigns
 20 Pay reigning's due: since statecraft so ordains —
 Wed for the commonweal's sake! law prescribes
 One wife: but to submission licence bribes
 Unruly nature: mistresses accept
 — Well, at discretion! Prove I so inept
 A scholar, thus instructed? Dearest, be
 Wife and all mistresses in one to me,
 Now, henceforth, and for ever!" So smiled he.

VI.

Good: but the minister, the crafty one,
 Got ear of what was doing — all but done —
 30 Not sooner, though, than the king's very self,
 Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf
 Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar
 The abomination! Mix with muck my star?
 Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed
 An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed?
 Nuptial me no such nuptials!" "Past dispute,
 Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"
 Admired the minister: "yet, all the same,

I would we may not — while we play his game,
 The ducal meteor's — also lose our own, 4
 The solar monarch's: we relieve your throne
 Of an ungracious presence, like enough:
 Baulked of his project he departs in huff,
 And so cuts short — dare I remind the king? —
 Our not so unsuccessful bargaining.
 The contract for eventual heritage
 Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage
 Attained by just this other contract, — each
 Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.
 Off goes the duke in dudgeon — off withal 5
 Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.
 You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,
 Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot
 Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim:
 The man will mulct you — for americing him?
 Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude!
 A witless wight in some fantastic mood
 Would drown himself: you plunge into the wave,
 Pluck forth the undeserving: he, you save,
 Pulls you clean under also for your pains. 6
 Sire, little need that I should tax my brains
 To help your inspiration!" "Let him sink!
 Always contriving" — hints the royal wink —
 "To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes."

VII.

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths
 At eve, — so little time to lose, you see,
 Before the Church should weld indissolubly
 Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,
 Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride, —
 At the preliminary banquet, graced 7
 By all the lady's kinsfolk come in haste
 To share her triumph, — lo, a thunder-clap!
 "Who importunes now?" "Such is my mishap —
 In the king's name! No need that any stir
 Except this lady!" bids the minister:
 "With her I claim a word apart, no more:
 For who gainsays — a guard is at the door.
 Hold, duke! Submit you, lady, as I bow
 To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now!
 It well may happen I no whit arrest 8

Your marriage: be it so, — we hope the best!
By your leave, gentles! Lady, pray you, hence!
Duke, with my soul and body's deference!"

VIII.

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows
Copiously forth. "What flesh shall dare oppose

The king's command? The matter in debate

— How plain it is! Yourself shall arbitrate,
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate

His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,
10 Accounts as nought old gains of rank and birth,

Ancestral obligation, recent fame,
(We know his feats) — nay, ventures to disclaim

Our will and pleasure almost — by report —

Waives in your favour dukeliness, in short, —

We — ('tis the king speaks) — who might forthwith stay

Such suicidal purpose, brush away
A bad example shame would else record, —

Lean to indulgence rather. At his word
We take the duke: allow him to complete

20 The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet

Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,

Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his fault

Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem
Recover, — what if wisely he redeem

The past, — in earnest of good faith, at once

Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce
As may suffice — prevent occasion slip —

And constitute our actual ownership?
Concede this — straightway be the marriage blessed

30 By warrant of this paper! Things at rest,
This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,

To-morrow you become — from what you are,

The druggist's daughter — not the duke's mere spouse,

But the king's own adopted: heart and house

Open to you — the idol of a court
'Which heaven might copy' — sing our poet-sort.

In this emergency, on you depends
The issue: plead what bliss the king intends!

Should the duke frown, should arguments and prayers,
Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain, — 40
who cares?

We leave the duke to his obduracy,
Companionless, — you, madam, follow me
Without, where divers of the body-guard
Wait signal to enforce the king's award
Of strict seclusion: over you at least
Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased
Precipitation! How avert its crash?"

IX.

"Re-enter, sir! A hand that's calm not rash,

Averts it!" quietly the lady said.

"Yourself shall witness."

At the table's head
Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat glued

In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued

Her speech to end — syllabled quietude.

X.

"Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take

The hand you proffered me for love's sole sake,

Conscious my love matched yours; as you, myself

Would waive, when need were, all but love — from self

To potency. What fortune brings about
Haply in some far future, finds me out,

Faces me on a sudden here and now. 60
The better! Read — if beating heart allow —

Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame!

I and your conscience — hear and grant our claim!

Never dare alienate God's gift you hold
Simply in trust for him! Choose muck

for gold?

Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled

By what I count my least of worthiness
— The youth, the beauty, — you renounce

them — yes,

With all that's most too: love as well you lose,

Slain by what slays in you the honour! 70
Choose!

Dear — yet my husband — dare I love you yet?"

XI.

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled, — words, words and yet

More words, — I spare you such fool's fever-fret.

They were not of one sort at all, one size,

As souls go — he and she. 'Tis said, the eyes
Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.
The minister was mollified at last:
"Take a day, — two days even, ere
through pride
You perish, — two days' counsel — then
decide!"

X I.

— "If I shall save his honour and my soul?
Husband, — this one last time, — you
tear the scroll?
Farewell, duke! Sir, I follow in your
train!"

XIII.

So she went forth: they never met again
■ The duke and she. The world paid com-
pliment
(Is it worth noting?) when, next day, she
sent
Certain gifts back — "jewelry fit to deck
Whom you call wife." I know not round
what neck
They took to sparkling, in good time —
weeks thence.

XIV.

Of all which was the pleasant consequence,
So much and no more — that a fervid
youth,
Big-hearted boy, — but ten years old, in
truth, —
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood
can,
The unduchessed lady: boy and lad grew
man:
20 He loved as man perchance may: did
meanwhile
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile
The years, no few, until he found a
chance:
Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,
Outbroke the love that stood at arms so
long,
Brooked no withstanding longer. They
were wed.
Whereon from camp and court alike he fled,
Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into
night,
Evermore lost, a ruined satellite:
And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness
30 That lapped him in obscurity! You guess
Such joy is fugitive: she died full soon.
He did his best to die — as sun, so moon
Left him, turned dusk to darkness abso-
lute.
Failing of death — why, saintship seemed
to suit:
Yes, your sort, Don! He trembled on the
verge
Of monkhood: trick of cowl and taste of
scourge

He tried: then, kicked not at the pricks
perverse,
But took again, for better or for worse,
The old way in the world, and, much the
same
Man o' the outside, fairly played life's 4
game.

XV.

"Now, Saint Scholastica,¹ what time she
fared
In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
Right in her path! Her waist she promptly
strips
Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,
And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's
court
Leads him." Ay, many a legend of the
sort
Do you praiseworthily authenticate:
Spare me the rest. This much of no de-
bate
Admits: my lady flourished in grand days
When to be duchess was to dance the hays 50
Up, down, across the heaven amid its
host:
While to be hailed the sun's own self al-
most —
So close the kinship — was — was —

Saint, for this,
Be yours the feet I stoop to — kneel and
kiss!
So human? Then the mouth too, if you
will!
Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

XVI.

One leans to like the duke, too: up we'll
patch
Some sort of saintship for him — not to
match
Hers — but man's best and woman's worst
amount
So nearly to the same thing, that we count 6
In man a miracle of faithfulness
If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress
On the main fact that love, when love in-
deed,
Is wholly solely love from first to last —
Truth — all the rest a lie. Toolikely, fast
Enough that necklace went to grace the
throat
— Let's say, of such a dancer as makes
doat
The senses when the soul is satisfied —
Trogalia, say the Greeks — a sweetmeat
tried
Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth, 70
Once body's proper meal consigned be-
neath
Such unconsidered munching.

¹ St. Benedict's sister.

XVII

Fancy's flight

Makes me a listener when, some sleepless
night,
The duke reviewed his memories, and
agbask

Found that the Present intercepts the Past
With such effect as when a cloud enwraps
The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon

perhaps
To who walks under, till comes, late or
soon,

A stumble: up he looks, and lo, the moon
Calm, clear, convincingly herself once
more!

to How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust
between

Him and fulgence? Speak, fool — duke,
I mean!

XVIII

"Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold
she-shape,

A terror with those black-balled worlds
of eyes,

That black hair bristling solid-built from
nape

To crown it coils about? O dread sur-
mise!

Take, tread on, trample under past escape
Your capture, spoil and trophy! Do —
devise

Insults for one who, fallen once, ne'er shall
rise!

"Mock on, triumphant o'er the prostrate
shame!

20 Laugh 'Here lies he among the false to
Love —

Love's loyal liegeman once: the very same
Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered
above

Inconstancy: yet why his faith defame?
Our eagle's victor was at least no dove.

No dwarfish knight picked up our giant's
glove —

"When, putting prowess to the proof,
faith urged

Her champion to the challenge: had it
chanced

That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty —
merged

All in one woman — merely these ad-
vanced

30 Their claim to conquest, — hardly had he
purged

His mind of memories, dearnesses en-
hanced

Rather than harmed by death, nor, disen-
tranced,

"Promptly had he abjured the old pre-
tence

To prove his kind's superior — first to
last

Display erect on his heart's eminence
An altar to the never-dying Past.

For such feat faith might boast fit play of
fence

And easily disarm the iconoclast
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty: impudence

"Fought in their stead, and how could 44
faith but fall?

There came a bold she-shape brisk-
marching, bent

No inch of her imperious stature, tall
As some war-engine from whose top was
sent

One shattering volley out of eye's black
ball,

And prone lay faith's defender! Mock-
cry spent?

Malice discharged in full? In that event,

"My queenly impudence, I cover close,
I wrap me round with love of your black
hair,

Black eyes, black every wicked inch of
those

Limbs' war-tower tallness: so much 50
truth lives there

'Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet —
who knows?

What if such things are? No less, such
things were.

Then was the man your match whom now
you dare

"Treat as existent still. A second truth!
They held — this heap of lies you rightly
scorn —

A man who had approved himself in
youth

More than a match for — you? for sea-
foam-born

Venus herself: you conquer him forsooth?
'Tis me his ghost: he died since left and
lorn,

As needs must Samson when his hair is 60
shorn.

"Some day, and soon, be sure himself will
rise,

Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-dis-
guise.

Ghosts tired of waiting can play tricks,
you know!

Tread, trample me — such sport we ghosts
devise,

Waiting the morn-star's re-appearance —
though

You think we vanish scared by the cock's
crow."

WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART.

[An unfortunate poet (1722-1771) known to all Boswellians from anecdotes in the great Biography. He was a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and until he lost his reason a very indifferent versifier. He married a daughter of Newbery the publisher, and suffered much poverty. He lives as the author of the "Song to David," a series of magnificent stanzas composed while their author was in confinement for unsoundness of mind.]

I.

It seems as if . . . or did the actual
chance
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be
said!
How might this happen? Dreaming,
blindfold led
By visionary hand, did soul's advance
Precede my body's, gain inheritance
Of fact by fancy — so that when I read
At length with waking eyes your Song, in-
stead
Of mere bewilderment, with me first
glance
Was but full recognition that in trance
Or merely thought's adventure some old
day
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or —
well,
Why might it not have been, the miracle
Broke on me as I took my sober way
Through veritable regions of our earth
And made discovery, many a wondrous
one?

II.

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:
I was exploring some huge house, had gone
Through room and room complacently, no
dearth
Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,
Adequate culture: wealth had run to
waste
Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint:
All showed the Golden Mean without a
hint
Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.
The master of the mansion was no fool
Assuredly, no genius just as sure!
Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure
Of now too much and now too little cost,
And satisfied me sight was never lost
Of moderate design's accomplishment
In calm completeness. On and on I went,
With no more hope than fear of what came
next,
Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift
A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift

Indeed of scene! So — thus it is thou
deck'st,
High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-
mortar work?

III.

It was the Chapel. That a star, from
murk
Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,
Were small surprise: but from broad day
I passed
Into a presence that turned shine to shade.
There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid, 40
Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine
By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine
More varied — beauty with magnificence —
Than this: from floor to roof one evidence
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No
niche
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space
but glowed
With colour, gleamed with carving — hues
which owed
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed
With rainbow-substance — rare shapes 50
never wed
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-
born once,
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's re-
sponse
To earth's despair. And all seemed old
yet new:
Youth, — in the marble's curve, the canvas'
hue,
Apparent, — wanted not the crowning
thrill
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still
Had worked here — could it be, what lent
them skill
Retained a power to supervise, protect,
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect
Our life with theirs? No merely modern 60
touch
Told me that here the artist, doing much,
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better,
lives —
So needs must learn.

IV.

Well, these provocatives
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went
Big with anticipation — well-nigh fear —
Of what next room and next for startled
eyes
Might have in store, surprise beyond sur-
prise.
Next room and next and next — what fol-
lowed here?
Why, nothing! not one object to arrest
My passage — everywhere too manifest 70
The previous decent null and void of best
And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,

Calm commonplace which neither missed,
nor hit
Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark pro-
posed.

V.

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed
Your case, my Christopher? The man
was sound
And sane at starting: all at once the
ground
Gave way beneath his step, a certain
smoke
Curled up and caught him, or perhaps
down broke
A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
in conflagration. Then — as heaven were
loth
To linger — let earth understand too well
How heaven at need can operate — off fell
The flame-robe, and the untransfigured
man
Resumed sobriety, — as he began,
So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

VI.

Now, what I fain would know is — could
it be
That he — whoe'er he was that furnished
forth
The Chapel, making thus, from South to
North,
Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo
Join Watts, was found but once combining
so
The elder and the younger, taking stand
On Art's supreme, — or that yourself who
sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-
clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empowered
to claim
Affinity on just one point — (or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you
full) —
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance, — live, die
— Proved plainly two mere mortals who
drew nigh
One moment — that, to Art's best hierar-
chy,
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?
What if, in one point only, then and there
The otherwise all-unapproachable
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere
pretend
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to
end
The plane with its embrace? No, surely!
Still,
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit
less

Than cube's superimposure. Such suc-
cess
Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donned the singing- 40
dress —
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the
screen
'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight
from soul, —
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
Live from the censer — shapely or uncouth
Fire-suffused through and through, one
blaze of truth
Undeclared by a lie, — (you have my
mind) —
For, think! this blaze outleapt with black
behind
And blank before, when Hayley and the
rest . . .
But let the dead successors worst and best
Bury their dead: with life be my concern — 50
Yours with the fire-flame: what I fain
would learn
Is just — (suppose me haply ignorant
Down to the common knowledge, doctors
vaunt)
Just this — why only once the fire-flame
was:
No matter if the marvel came to pass
The way folk judged — if power too long
suppressed
Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar
guessed,
Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said),
A turmoil of the particles disturbed
Brain's workaday performance in your 60
head,
Spurred spirit to wild action health had
curbed:
And so verse issued in a cataract
Whence prose, before and after, unper-
turbed
Was wont to wend its way. Concede the
fact
That here a poet was who always could —
Never before did — never after would —
Achieve the feat: how were such fact ex-
plained?

VII.

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there
fell
Disguise from Nature, so that Truth re-
mained
Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell 70
Us others of her majesty and might
In large, her lovelinesses infinite
In little, — straight you used the power
wherewith
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith
Each object, thoroughly revealed might
view
And comprehend the old things thus made
new,

So that while eye saw, so to tongue could trust
 Thing which struck word out, and once more adjust
 Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault
 Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault
 On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed brood
 Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life
 That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife,
 Above, below, — each had its note and name
 For Man to know by, — Man who, now — the same
 10 As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees
 Be named him ere he note by what degrees
 Of strength and beauty to its end Design
 Ever thus operates — (your thought and mine,
 No matter for the many dissident) —
 So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent
 In words for once with you?

VIII.

Then — back was furled
 The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world
 Darkened into the old oft-catalogued
 Repository of things that sky, wave, land,
 20 Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged
 Now, just as long ago, by tellings and
 Re-tellings to satiety, which strike
 Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like
 None was so startled as yourself when friends
 Came, hailed your fast-returning wits:
 "Health mends
 Importantly, for — to be plain with you —
 This scribble on the wall was done — in lieu
 Of pen and paper — with — ha, ha! — your key
 Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see
 30 How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped
 Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped
 From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough —
 Smart's who translated Horace! Write us now" . . .
 Why, what Smart did write — never afterward
 One line to show that he, who paced the sward,
 Had reached the zenith from his mad-house cell.

IX.

Was it because you judged (I know full well
 You never had the fancy) — judged — as some —
 That who makes poetry must reproduce
 Thus ever and thus only, as they come, 40
 Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse
 Throughout creation, so that eye and ear,
 Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognise,
 At touch of just a trait, the strength appear, —
 Suggested by a line's lapse see arise
 All evident the beauty, — fresh surprise
 Startling at fresh achievement? "So, indeed,
 Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,
 Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine
 Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off 50
 to seed!"
 (My prose — your poetry I dare not give,
 Purpling too much my mere grey argument.)
 — Was it because you judged — when fugitive
 Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent
 Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,
 At truth's appearance, — that you humbly bent
 The head and, bidding vivid work good-bye,
 Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more
 A drab-clothed decent proseman as before?
 Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash 60
 thus laid bare
 — That was effectual service: made aware
 Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the text,
 Awaits your teaching. Nature? What comes next?
 Why all the strength and beauty? — to be shown
 Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone
 By Man who needs must deal with *ough* that's known
 Never so lately and so little? Friend,
 First give us knowledge, then appoint its use!
 Strength, beauty are the means: ignore their end?
 As well you stopped at proving how profuse 70
 Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right
 Ready to help the builder, — careless quite
 If he should take, or leave the same to strew

Earth idly, — as by word's flash bring in
view

Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the
same

Go on beholding. Why gains unem-
ployed?

Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction — haply leaving joy behind:
And you, the instructor, would you slack
pursuit

Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the
fool,

Abjuring a superior privilege?

Please simply when your function is to
rule —

By thought incite to deed? From edge to
edge

Of earth's round, strength and beauty
everywhere

Pullulate — and must you particularise
All, each and every apparition? Spare
Yourself and us the trouble! Ears and
eyes

Want so much strength and beauty, and no
less

Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh,
yes —

The other method's favoured in our day!
The end ere the beginning: as you may,
Master the heavens before you study
earth,

Make you familiar with the meteor's birth
Ere you descend to scrutinise the rose!
I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows
That lead man from the bottom where he
plants

Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top:
Arrived there, vain enough will seem the
vaunts

Of those who say — "We scale the skies,
then drop

To earth — to find, how all things there are
loth

To answer heavenly law: we understand
The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's
growth —

How other than should be by law's com-
mand!"

Would not you tell such — "Friends, be-
ware lest fume

Offuscate sense: learn earth first ere pre-
sume

to teach heaven legislation. Law must
be

Active in earth or nowhere: earth you
see, —

Or there or not at all, Will, Power and Love
Admit discovery, — as below, above

Seek next law's confirmation! But re-
verse

to The order, where's the wonder things grow
worse

Than, by the law your fancy formulates,
They should be? Cease from anger at the
fates

Which thwart themselves so madly. Live
and learn,

Not first learn and then live, is our con-
cern.

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODING- TON.

[See "Dictionary of National Biog-
raphy," vol. xv.; also the thin volume of
his Memoirs or Diary first published in
1784. The author was born 1691, and
died 1762. He early became a politician,
and attached himself to Walpole. He was
accomplished, profuse, and corrupt, and
has become by common consent of histo-
rians a convenient by-word for eighteenth-
century immoralities of public men.]

I.

AH, George Bubb Dodington Lord Mel-
combe, — no,

Yours was the wrong way! — always un-
derstand,

Supposing that permissibly you planned
How statesmanship — your trade — in
outward show

Might figure as inspired by simple zeal
For serving country, king, and common- 50
weal,

(Though service tire to death the body,
tease

The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-
drudge)

And yet should prove zeal's outward show
agrees

In all respects — right reason being judge —
With inward care that, while the statesman
spends

Body and soul thus freely for the sake
Of public good, his private welfare take

No harm by such devotedness. Intends
Scripture aught else — let captious folk
inquire —

Which teaches "Labourers deserve their 60
hire,

And who neglects his household bears the
bell

Away of sinning from an infidel?"?

Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a
thought

How birds build nests; at outside, roughly
wrought,

Twig knots with twig, loam plastered up
each chink,

Leaving the inmate rudely lodged — you
think?

Peep but inside! That specious rude-and-
rough

Covers a domicile where downy fluff
 Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
 Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
 'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the
 teeth
 Of wind and weather, guard what swung
 beneath
 From upset only, but contrived himself
 A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
 Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
 How nature prompts each volatile! Thus
 — self
 10 Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging,
 power
 Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
 Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor
 tower,
 Contents the building eagle: rook shoves
 close
 To brother rook on branch, while crow
 morose
 Apart keeps balance perched on topmost
 bough.
 No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:
 Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the
 bower —
 His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
 The lacking instance when at loss to get
 20 A feathered parallel to what we find
 The secret motor of some mighty mind
 That worked such wonders — all for
 vanity!
 Worked them to haply figure in the eye
 Of intimates as first of — doers' kind?
 Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
 Paid by a sourish smile. How says the
 Sage?
 Birds born to strut prepare a platform-
 stage
 With sparkling stones and speckled shells,
 all sorts
 Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
 30 Whereon to pose and posture and engage
 The priceless female simper.

II.

I have gone
 Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington,
 Lest, when I take you presently to task
 For the wrong way of working, you should
 ask
 What fool conjectures that profession
 means
 Performance? that who goes behind the
 scenes
 Finds, — acting over, — still the soot-
 stuff screens
 Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's
 Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half
 chokes
 40 Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since?"
 No, each resumes his garb, stands — Moor
 or prince —

Decently draped: just so with statesman-
 ship
 All outside show, in short, is sham — why
 wince?
 Concede me — while our parley lasts! You
 trip
 Afterwards — lay but this to heart! (there
 lurks
 Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks
 Somewhat the sprightliest-scheming brain
 that's bent
 On brave adventure, would but heart consent!
 — Here trip you, that — your aim al-
 lowed as right —
 Your means thereto were wrong. Come, 5
 we, this night,
 Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
 Are at odds only as to — not the will
 But way of winning solace for ourselves
 — No matter if the ore for which zeal
 delves
 Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence
 Is — we do good to men at — whose ex-
 pense
 But ours? who tire the body, tease the soul,
 Simply that, running, we may reach fame's
 goal
 And wreathe at last our brows with bay
 — the State's
 Disinterested slaves, nay — please the 6
 Fates —
 Saviours and nothing less: such lot has
 been!
 Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, se-
 rene, —
 O happy consummation! — brought about
 By managing with skill the rabble-rout
 For which we labour (never mind the
 name —
 People or populace, for praise or blame)
 Making them understand — their heaven,
 their hell,
 Their every hope and fear is ours as well.
 Man's cause — what other can we have at
 heart?
 Whence follows that the necessary part 7
 High o'er Man's head we play, — and
 freelier breathe
 Just that the multitude which gasps be-
 neath
 May reach the level where unstified stand
 Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,
 Assist the prostrate public. 'Tis by right
 Merely of such pretence, we reach the
 height
 Where storms abound, to brave — nay,
 court their stress,
 Though all too well aware — of pomp the
 less,
 Of peace the more! But who are we, to
 spurn
 For peace's sake, duty's pointing? Up, 8
 then — earn

Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom!
Now, such fit height to launch salvation
from,
How get and gain? Since help must needs
be craved
By would-be saviours of the else-unsaved,
How coax them to co-operate, lend a lift,
Kneel down and let us mount?

III.

You say "Make shift
By sham — the harsh word: preach and
teach, persuade
Somehow the Public — not despising aid
Of salutary artifice — we seek
Solely their good: our strength would raise
the weak,
Our cultivated knowledge supplement
Their rudeness, rawness: why to us were
lent
Ability except to come in use?
Who loves his kind must by all means in-
duce
That kind to let his love play freely, press
In Man's behalf to full performance!"

IV.

Yes —

Yes, George, we know! — whereat they
hear, believe,
And bend the knee, and on the neck receive
Who fawned and cringed to purpose?
Not so, George!
Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who
forge
Lies of superior fashion day by day
And hour by hour? With craftsmen
versed as they
What chance of competition when the tools
Only a novice wields? Are knaves such
fools?
Disinterested patriots, spare your tongue
The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles
it flung
Pearl-like profuse to swine — a herd,
whereof
No unit needs be taught, his neighbour's
trough
Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines
the husks
Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp
tusks.
No animal — much less our lordly Man —
Obeys its like: with strength all rule be-
gan,
The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon suc-
ceeds
Discrimination, — nicer power Man needs
To rule him than is bred of bone and thew:
Intelligence must move strength's self.
This too
Lasts but its time: the multitude at length
Looks inside for intelligence and strength

And finds them here and there to pick and
choose:

"All at your service, mine, see!" Ay, but 40
who's

My George, at this late day, to make his
boast

"In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast,
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who
crowd your ranks?"

"Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your
thanks

By unexampled yearning for Man's sake —
Passion that solely waits your help to take
Effect in action!" George, which one of
us

But holds with his own heart communion
thus:

"I am, if not of men the first and best,
Still — to receive enjoyment — properest: 50
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit
Most likely — craft must serve in place of
it.

Flatter, cajole! If so I bring within
My net the gains which wit and force
should win,
What hinders?" 'Tis a trick we know of
old:

Try, George, some other of tricks manifold!
The multitude means mass and mixture —
right

Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite?
Dive into Man, your medley: see the
waste!

Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced 60
By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,
Will without means and means in want of
will

— Sure we might fish, from out the mothers'
sons

That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons!
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,
To take his seat upon our backs and ride
As statesman conquering and to conquer?

Well,

The last expedient, which must needs excel
Those old ones — this it is, — at any rate
To-day's conception thus I formulate: 70

As simple force has been replaced, just so
Must simple wit be: men have got to know
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled
Too plentifully, counts not, — puts to
shame

Modest possessors like yourself who claim,
By virtue of it merely, power and place
— Which means the sweets of office. Since
our race

Teems with the like of you, some special
gift,

Your very own, must coax our hands to 80
lift,

And backs to bear you: is it just and right
To privilege your nature?

v.

“State things quite
Other than so” — make answer! “I pre-
tend
No such community with men. Perpend
My key to domination! Who would use
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce
The element that awes Man. Once for
all,
His nature owns a Supernatural
In fact as well as phrase — which found
must be
— Where, in this doubting age? Old
mystery
10 Has served its turn — seen through and
sent adrift
To nothingness: new wizard-craft makes
shift
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and
book, —
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must
look
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.
Somebody comes to conjure: that's he?
Pish!
He's like the roomful of rapt gazers, —
there's
No sort of difference in the garb he wears
From ordinary dressing, — gesture, speech,
Department, just like those of all and
each
20 That eye their master of the minute.
Stay!
What of the something — call it how you
may —
Uncanny in the — quack? That's easy
said!
Notice how the Professor turns no head
And yet takes cognisance of who accepts,
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept's
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait
To trap the trickster! Doubtless, out of
date
Are dealings with the devil: yet, the stir
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,
30 Mock-modest boldness masked in diffi-
dence, —
What if the man have — who knows how
or whence? —
Confederate potency unguessed by us —
Prove no such cheat as he pretends?”

vi.

Ay, thus

Had but my George played statesmanship's
new card
That carries all! “Since we” — avers the
Bard —
“All of us have one human heart” — as
good
As say — by all of us is understood
Right and wrong, true and false — in
rough, at least,

We own a common conscience. God, man,
beast —
How should we qualify the statesman-
shape
I fancy standing with our world agape?
Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and
nail
The outrageous designation! “Quack”
men quail
Before? You see, a little year ago
They heard him thunder at the thing
which, lo,
To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what
erst
Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, ac-
cursed!
And yet where's change? Who, awe-
struck, cares to point
Critical finger at a dubious joint
In armour, true *as triplex*, breast and back
5 Binding about, defiant of attack,
An imperturbability that's — well,
Or innocence or impudence — how tell
One from the other? Could ourselves
broach lies,
Yet brave mankind with those unaltered
eyes,
Those lips that keep the quietude of truth?
Dare we attempt the like? What quick
uncouth
Disturbance of thy smug economy,
O coward visage! Straight would all
descry
Back on the man's brow the boy's blush
6 once more!
No: he goes deeper — could our sense ex-
plore —
Finds conscience beneath conscience such
as ours.
Genius is not so rare, — prodigious pow-
ers —
Well, others boast such, — but a power like
this
Mendacious intrepidity — *quid vis?*
Besides, imposture plays another game,
Admits of no diversion from its aim
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal a-flare
In every shape at every turn, — nowhere
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress
70 Of what does guile succeed but earnestness,
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched
with aught
But earnestness, the levity were fraught
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is
guile;
Here no act wants its qualifying smile,
Its covert pleasantry to neutralise
The outward ardour. Can our chief
despise
Even while most he seems to adulate?
As who should say “What though it be my
fate
To deal with fools? Among the crowd
80 must lurk

Some few with faculty to judge my work
Spite of its way which suits, they under-
stand,

The crass majority: — the Sacred Band,
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a
touch

Of subintelligent nod and wink —
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery
moves the gorge:

Mine were the mode to awe the many,
George!

They guess you half despise them while
most bent

On demonstrating that your sole intent
o Strives for their service. Sncer at them?
Yourself

'Tis you disparage, — tricky as an elf,
Scorning what most you strain to bring to
pass,

Laughingly careless, — triply cased in
brass, —

While pushing strenuous to the end in view.
What follows? Why, you formulate
within

The vulgar headpiece this conception
"Win

A master-mind to serve us needs we must,
One who, from motives we but take on
trust,

Acts strangelier — haply wiselier than we
know —

Stronglier, for certain. Did he say 'I
throw

Aside my good for yours, in all I do
Care nothing for myself and all for you' —
We should both understand and disbe-
lieve:

Said he 'Your good I laugh at in my
sleeve,

My own it is I solely labour at,
Pretending yours the while' — that, even
that

We, understanding well, give credence to,
And so will none of it. But here 'tis
through

Our recognition of his service, wage
o Well earned by work, he mounts to such a
stage

Above competitors as all save Bubb
Would agonise to keep. Yet, — here's the
rub —

So slightly does he hold by our esteem
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we
seem

Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe
And jest — scorn insuppressive: what
ascribe

The rashness to? Our pay and praise to
boot —

Do these avail him to tread underfoot
Something inside us all and each, that
stands

o Somehow instead of somewhat which
commands

'Lie not'? Folk. fear to jeopardise their
soul,

Stumble at times, walk straight upon the
whole, —

That's nature's simple instinct: what may
be

The portent here, the influence such as we
Are strangers to?" —

VII.

Exact the thing I call
Man's despot, just the Supernatural
Which, George, was wholly out of — far
beyond

Your theory and practice. You had
conned

But to reject the precept "To succeed
In gratifying selfishness and greed, 50
Asseverate such qualities exist

Nowise within yourself! then make acquit
By all means, with no sort of fear!"

Alack,
That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back
On still a working pretext — "Hearth and

Home,
The Altar, love of England, hate of
Rome" —

That's serviceable lying — that perchance
Had screened you decently: but 'ware
advance

By one step more in perspicacity
Of these our dupes! At length they get to 60
see

As through the earlier, this the latter
plea

And find the greed and selfishness at
source!

Venium est ad triarios: last resource
Should be to what but — exquisite disguise

Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like
lies,

Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief?
Say — you hold in contempt — not them
in chief —

But first and foremost your own self! No
use

In men but to make sport for you, induce
The puppets now to dance, now stand 70
stock-still,

Now knock their heads together, at your
will

For will's sake only — while each plays
his part

Submissive: why? through terror at the
heart:

"Can it be — this bold man, whose hand
we saw

Openly pull the wires, obeys some law
Quite above Man's — nay, God's?" On
face fall they.

This was the secret missed, again I say,
Out of your power to grasp conception of,
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the
scoff

That greets your very name: folk see but
 one
 Fool more, as well as knave, in Doding-
 ton.

WITH FRANCIS FURINI.

[F. Furini, born at Florence 1600, died
 1649. A famous painter of the nude, who
 at the age of forty became a parish priest
 and a devout liver. He is said to have
 regretted his undraped pictures.]

I.

NAV, *that*, Furini, never I at least
 Mèan to believe! What man you were I
 know,
 While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-
 priest,
 Something about two hundred years ago.
 Priest — you did duty punctual as the sun
 That rose and set above Saint Sano's
 church,
 Blessing Mugello: of your flock not one
 10 But showed a whiter fleece because of
 smirch,
 Your kind hands wiped it clear from: were
 they poor?
 Bounty broke bread apace, — did mar-
 riage lag
 For just the want of moneys that ensure
 Fit hearth-and-home provision? — straight
 your bag
 Unplumped itself, — reached hearts by
 way of palms
 Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All
 about
 Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms
 At worship offered in bare walls without
 The comfort of a picture? — prompt such
 need
 20 Our painter would supply, and throngs to
 see
 Witnessed that goodness — no unholy
 greed
 Of gain — had coaxed from Don Furini —
 he
 Whom princes might in vain implore to toil
 For worldly profit — such a masterpiece.
 Brief — priest, you poured profuse God's
 wine and oil
 Praiseworthy, I know: shall praising
 cease
 When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man,
 You stand for judgment? Rather — what
 acclaim
 — "Good son, good brother, friend in
 whom we scan
 30 No fault nor flaw" — salutes Furini's
 name,
 The loving as the liberal! Enough:
 Only to ope a lily, though for sake
 Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough

Loose gold about its anther. I shall take
 No blame in one more blazon, last of all —
 Good painter were you: if in very deed
 I styled you great — what modern art dares
 call

My word in question? Let who will take
 heed

Of what he seeks and misses in your brain
 To balance that precision of the brush
 Your hand could ply so deftly: all in vain
 Strives poet's power for outlet when the
 push

Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate
 Of painter's impotency. Agnolo —

Thine were alike the head and hand, by
 fate

Doubly endowed! Who boasts head only
 — woe

To hand's presumption should brush emu-
 late

Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show
 Thought wrecked and ruined where the
 inexpert

Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go
 Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt!
 No — painter such as that miraculous
 Michael, who deems you? But the ample
 gift

Of gracing walls else blank of this our
 house

Of life with imagery, one bright drift
 Poured forth by pencil, — man and woman
 mere,

Glorified till half owned for gods, — the
 dear

Fleshly perfection of the human shape, —
 This was apportioned you whereby to
 praise

Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily
 essays,

By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape
 Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays
 Two-fold ineptitude.

II.

By such sure ways

Do I return, Furini, to my first
 And central confidence — that he I proved
 Good priest, good man, good painter, and
 rehearsed

Praise upon praise to show — not simply
 loved

For virtue, but for wisdom honoured too
 Needs must Furini be, — it follows — who
 Shall undertake to breed in me belief
 That, on his death-bed, weakness played
 the thief

With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite?
 List to the chronicler! With main and
 might —

So fame runs — did the poor soul beg his
 friends

To buy and burn his hand-work, make
 amends

For having reproduced therein — (Ah me!

Sighs fame — that's friend Filippo) — nudity!

Yes, I assure you: he would paint — not men

Merely — a pardonable fault — but when He had to deal with — oh, not mother Eve Alone, permissibly in Paradise Naked and unashamed, — but dared achieve

Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price By also painting women — (why the need?)

Just as God made them: there, you have the truth!

Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,

One foot upon the moss fringe, would some Nymph

Try, with its venturesome fellow, if the lymph Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge;

The while a-heap her garments on its ledge

Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach, — No one least kid skin cast around her!

Speech Shrinks from enumerating ease and ease Of — were it but Diana at the chase,

With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high! No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,

Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank

Triumph of flesh! For — whom had he to thank

— This self-appointed nature-student? Whence

Picked he up practice? By what evidence Did he unhandsonely become adept

In simulating bodies? How except By actual sight of such? Himself confessed

The enormity: quoth Philip "When I pressed

The painter to acknowledge his abuse Of artistry else potent — what excuse

Made the infatuated man? I give His very words: 'Did you but know, as I,

— O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive Mild-moral-monger, what the agony

Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself In imitating Nature — (Man, poor elf,

Striving to match the finger-mark of Him The immeasurably matchless) — gay or

grim,

Pray, would you: smile he? Leave mere fools to tax

Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax

That, in its mid throes, idle fancy sees The moment for admittance! Plead

ings these — Specious, I grant." So adds, and seems to whine

Somewhat, our censor — but shall truth convince

Blockheads like Baldinucci? ¹

III.

I resume

My incredulity: your other kind Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,

Even through death mist, as to grope in gloom

For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn 50 Ashes and dust all that your noble life

Did homage to life's Lord by, — bid them burn

These Baldinucci blockheads — pictures rise

With record, in each rendered loveliness, That one appreciative creature's debt

Of thanks to the Creator more or less, Was paid according as heart's will had met

Hand's power in Art's endeavour to express

Heaven's most consummate of achievements, bless

Earth by a semblance of the seal God set 60 On woman his supremest work. I trust

Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent In some fine fervour of thanksgiving just

For this — that soul and body's power you spent —

Agonised to adumbrate, trace in dust That marvel which we dream the firmament

Copies in star-device when fancies stray Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda —

God's best of beauteous and magnificent 70 Revealed to earth — the naked female form.

Nay, I mistake not: wrath that's but lukewarm

Would boil indeed were such a critic styled

Himself an artist: artist! Ossa piled Topping Olympus — the absurd which

crowns The extravagant — whereat one laughs, not frowns.

Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take

His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace, From out the sacred presence, void the

place Artists claim only. What — not merely wake

Our pity that suppressed concupiscence — 80 A satyr masked as matron — nukes pretence

To the coarse blue fly's instinct — can perceive

No better reason why she should exist

¹ Author of a history of Art, and a friend of Furini's.

— God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-
bosomed Eve —
Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist
To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure
stuff
Breed him back filth — this were not crime
enough?
But further — fly to style itself — nay,
more —
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch
down
Though but to where their garments sweep
the floor —
— Still catching some faint sparkle from
the crown
Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard,
20 Rafael, — to sit beside the feet of such,
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward
Their toleration — mercy overmuch —
By stealing from the throne-step to the
fools
Curious outside the gateway, all-agape
To learn by what procedure, in the schools
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape
May learn to be Correggio! Old and
young,
These learners got their lesson: Art was
just
A safety-screen — (Art, which Correggio's
tongue
20 Calls "Virtue") — for a skulking vice:
mere lust
Inspired the artist when his Night and
Morn
Slept and awoke in marble on that edge
Of heaven above our awestruck earth:
lust-born
His Eve low bending took the privilege
Of life from what our eyes saw — God's
own palm
That put the flame forth — to the love and
thanks
Of all creation save this recreant!

IV.

Our phrase, Furini! Not the artist-ranks
Claim riddance of an interloper: no —
30 This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff
Outside Art's pale — ay, grubbed, where
pine-trees grow,
For pignuts only.

V.

You the Sacred! If
Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower
Of Art in fulness, graced with head and
hand,
Head — to look up not downwards, hand
— of power
To make head's gain the portion of a
world
Where else the uninstructed ones too sure

Would take all outside beauty — film
that's furled
About a star — for the star's self, endure
No guidance to the central glory, — nay, 4
(Sadder) might apprehend the film was
fog,
Or (worst) wish all but vapour well away,
And sky's pure product thickened from
earth's bog —
Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest
failed
To trust their own soul's insight — why?
except
For warning that the head of the adept
May too much prize the hand, work un-
assailed
By scruple of the better sense that finds
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh
5 More than is meet a marvel custom blinds
Only the vulgar eye to. Now, less fear
That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship,
Will oft — will ever so offend! But —
hip
And thigh — smite the Philistine! You
— slunk here —
Connived at, by too easy tolerance,
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze
brush,
But dub your very self an Artist? Tush —
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must
needs
Own to affinity with yours — confess
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,
With each impurely-peevish worm that
breeds
Inside your brain's receptacle?

VI.

Enough.
Who owns "I dare not look on diadems
Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems
Others contentedly leave sparkling" —
gruff
Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why —
Consciously kleptomaniac — thrust your-
self
Where your illicit craving after pelf
Is tempted most — in the King's treasury?
Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus
you feel —
When folk clean-handed simply recognise
Treasure whereof the mere sight satis-
fies —
But straight your fingers are on itch to
steal!
Hence with you!"

Pray, Furini!

VII.

"Bounteous God,
Deviser and Dispenser of all gifts

To soul through sense, — in Art the soul
 uplifts
 Man's best of thanks! What but Thy
 measuring-rod
 Meted forth heaven and earth? more
 intimate,
 Thy very hands were busied with the task
 Of making, in this human shape, a mask —
 A match for that divine. Shall love abate
 Man's wonder? Nowise! True — true
 — all too true —
 No gift but, in the very plenitude
 Of its perfection, goes maimed, miscon-
 strued
 By wickedness or weakness: still, some
 few
 Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to
 mar
 Thy work by no admixture of their own,
 — Linn truth not falsehood, bid us love
 alone
 The type untampered with, the naked
 star!"

VIII.

And, prayer done, painter — what if you
 should preach?
 Not as of old when playing pulpiteer
 To simple-witted country folk, but here
 In actual London try your powers of speech
 On us the cultured, therefore sceptical —
 What would you? For, suppose he has his
 word
 In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,
 This painter-theologian? One and all
 We lend an ear — nay, Science takes
 thereto —
 Encourages the meanest who has racked
 Nature until he gains from her some fact,
 To state what truth is from his point of
 view,
 Mere pin-point though it be: since many
 such
 Conduce to make a whole, she bids our
 friend
 Come forward unabashed and haply lend
 His little life-experience to our much
 Of modern knowledge. Since she so in-
 sists,
 Up stands Furini.

IX.

"Evolutionists!
 At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance
 from heights,
 Our stations for discovery opposites, —
 How should ensue agreement? I ex-
 plain:
 'Tis the tip-top of things to which you
 strain
 Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm,
 And what and whence and how may be the
 spasm
 Which sets all going, stop you: down per-
 force

Needs must your observation take its ac-
 course,
 Since there's no moving upwards: link by
 link
 You drop to where the atoms somehow
 think,
 Feel, know themselves to be: the world's
 begun,
 Such as we recognise it. Have you done
 Descending? Here's ourself, — Man,
 known to-day,
 Duly evolved at last, — so far, you say.
 The sum and seal of being's progress.
 Good!
 Thus much at least is clearly understood —
 Of power does Man possess no particle:
 Of knowledge — just so much as shows 50
 that still
 It ends in ignorance on every side:
 But righteousness — ah, Man is deified
 Thereby, for compensation! Make sur-
 vey
 Of Man's surroundings, try creation —
 nay,
 Try emulation of the minimised
 Minuteness fancy may conceive! Sur-
 prised
 Reason becomes by two defeats for one —
 Not only power at each phenomenon
 Baffled, but knowledge also in default —
 Asking what is minuteness — yonder vault 60
 Speckled with suns, or this the millionth —
 thing,
 How shall I call? — that on some insect's
 wing
 Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?
 Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are:
 What then? The worst for Nature!
 Where began
 Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?
 True, he makes nothing, understands no
 whit:
 Had the initiator-spasm seen fit
 Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse
 And much the better were the universe. 70
 What does Man see or feel or apprehend
 Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to
 mend,
 Omissions to supply, — one wide disease
 Of things that are, which Man at once
 would ease
 Had will but power and knowledge? fail-
 ing both —
 Things must take will for deed — Man,
 nowise loth,
 Accepts pre-eminency: mere blind force —
 Mere knowledge undirected in its course
 By any care for what is made or marred
 In either's operation — these award 80
 The crown to? Rather let it deck thy
 brows,
 Man, whom alone a righteousness endows
 Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who
 disputes

- Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes
 Than power and knowledge in its gift, before
 Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,
 The less of moral sense like Man's we find:
 No sign of such before, — what comes behind,
 Who guesses? But until there crown our sight
 "The quite new — not the old mere infinite
 Of changings, — some fresh kind of sun and moon, —
 Then, not before, shall I expect a boon
 10 Of intuition just as strange, which turns
 Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns
 All Man's experience learned since Man was he.
 Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,
 The Prime Mind, therefore! neither wise nor strong —
 Whose fault? but were he both, then right, not wrong
 As now, throughout the world were paramount
 According to his will, — which I account
 The qualifying faculty. He stands
 Confessed supreme — the monarch whose commands
 20 Could he enforce, how bettered were the world!
 He's at the height this moment — to be hurled
 Next moment to the bottom by rebound
 Of his own peal of laughter. All around
 Ignorance wraps him, — whence and how and why
 Things are, — yet cloud breaks and lets blink the sky
 Just overhead, not elsewhere! What assures
 His optics that the very blue which lures
 Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense?
 Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
 30 Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
 So much and no more than lets through perhaps
 The murmured knowledge — 'Ignorance exists.'

x.

"I at the bottom, Evolutionists,
 Advise beginning, rather. I profess
 To know just one fact — my self-consciousness, —
 'Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled, —
 Knowledge: before me was my Cause —
 that's styled
 God: after, in due course succeeds the rest, —
 All that my knowledge comprehends —
 at best —

At worst, conceives about in mild despair. 4
 Light needs must touch on either darkness:
 where?
 Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause
 Before me, that I know — by certain laws
 Wholly unknown, whate'er I apprehend
 Within, without me, had its rise: thus blend
 I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.
 How far can knowledge any ray project
 On what comes after me — the universe?
 Well, my attempt to make the cloud dis-
 perse
 Begins — not from above but underneath: 5
 I climb, you soar, — who soars soon loses
 breath
 And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm
 on fact
 Ere hazarding the next step: soul's first
 act
 (Call consciousness the soul — some name
 we need)
 Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed
 Thereto (so call the body) — who has stept
 So far, there let him stand, become adept
 In body ere he shift his station thence
 One single hair's breadth. Do I make pre-
 tence
 To teach, myself unskilled in learning? 6
 Lo,
 My life's work! Let my pictures prove I
 know
 Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours
 Or is or should be, how the soul empowers
 The body to reveal its every mood
 Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude
 Of passion. If my hand attained to give
 Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,
 Did not I also fix each fleeting grace
 Of form and feature — save the beauteous
 face —
 Arrest decay in transitory might
 Of bone and muscle — cause the world to
 bless
 For ever each transcendent nakedness
 Of man and woman? Were such feats
 achieved
 By sloth, or strenuous labour unrelieved,
 — Yet lavished vainly? Ask that under-
 ground
 (So may I speak) of all on surface found
 Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to
 probe
 Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe
 Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck
 Veil after veil from Nature — were the luck
 Ours to surprise the secret men so name,
 That still eludes the searcher — all the
 same,
 Repays his search with still fresh proof —
 'Externe,
 Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and
 learn!
 Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm
 and fast

There did I plant my first foot. And the next?
 Nowhere! 'Twas put forth and withdrawn, perplexed
 At touch of what seemed stable and proved stiff
 Such as the coloured clouds are: plain enough
 There lay the outside universe: try Man —
 My most immediate! and the dip began
 From safe and solid into that profound
 Of ignorance I tell you surges round
 My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill,
 Evil and good irreconcilable
 Above, beneath, about my every side, —
 How did this wild confusion far and wide
 Tally with my experience when my stamp —
 So far from stirring — struck out, each a lamp,
 Spark after spark of truth from where I stood —
 Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,
 Want was the promise of supply, defect
 Ensured completion, — where and when and how?
 Leave that to the First Cause! Enough that now,
 Here where I stand, this moment's me and mine,
 Shows me what is, permits me to divine
 What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?
 Look at my pictures! What so glorifies
 The body that the permeating soul
 Finds there no particle elude control
 Direct, or fail of duty, — most obscure
 When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure
 The soul such raptures as its fancy stings
 Body to furnish when, uplift by wings
 Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,
 Loses itself above, where bliss has birth —
 (Heaven, be the phrase) — did that same Cause contrive
 Such solace for the body, soul must dive
 At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend
 To bury both alike on earth, our friend
 And fellow, where minutely exquisite
 Low lie the pleasures, now and here — no herb
 But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb
 In each small mystery of insect life —
 — Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet strife
 Continue still of fears with hopes, — for why?
 What if the Cause, whereof we now descry
 So far the wonder-working, lack at last
 Will, power, benevolence — a protoplast,
 No consummator, sealing up the sum

Of all things, — past and present and to come
 Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!
 There's my amount of knowledge — great or small,
 Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance
 Its light now on that depth of ignorance 54
 I shrank before from — yonder where the world
 Lies wreck-strewn, — evil towering, prone
 good — hurled
 From pride of place, on every side. For me
 (Patience, beseech you!) knowledge can but be
 Of good by knowledge of good's opposite —
 Evil, — since, to distinguish wrong from right,
 Both must be known in each extreme, beside —
 (Or what means knowledge — to aspire or bide
 Content with half-attaining? Hardly so!)
 Made to know on, know ever, I must know 60
 All to be known at any halting-stage
 Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage
 War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,
 Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy
 With all that quiets and contents, — in brief,
 Good strives with evil.

“Now then for relief,
 Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.
 ‘What?’ snarl you, ‘Is the fool's conceit thus strong —
 Must the whole outside world in soul and sense
 Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense?’ 70
 By no means! ‘Tis by merest touch of toe
 I try — not trench on — ignorance, just know —
 And so keep steady footing: how you fare,
 Caught in the whirlpool — that's the Cause's care,
 Strong, wise, good, — this I know at any rate
 In my own self, — but how may operate
 With you — strength, wisdom, goodness — no least blink
 Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me. Think!
 Could I see plain, be somehow certified
 All was illusion, — evil far and wide 80
 Was good disguised, — why, out with one huge wipe
 Goes knowledge from me. Type needs anti-type:
 As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
 Needs evil: how were pity understood

Unless by pain? Make evident that pain
Permissibly masks pleasure — you abstain
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of
hand

To weak Andromeda exposed on strand
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,
Help were not wanting: 'But 'tis false,'
cry you,

'Mere fancy-work of paint and brush!'
No less,

Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress
10 Beholders with a confidence they saw
Life, — veritable flesh and blood in awe
Of just as true a sea-beast, — would they
stare

Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick
And stone, according as their hearts were
quick

Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer
Could do as much, — at least, so books
aver, —

Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,
Make-fancy, nothing more. Though
wrong were right,

20 Could we but know — still wrong must
needs seem wrong

To do right's service, prove men weak or
strong,

Choosers of evil or of good. 'No such
Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch
Just here my solid standing-place amid
The wash and welter, whence all doubts are
bid

Back to the ledge they break against in
foam,

Futility: my soul, and my soul's home
This body, — how each operates on each,
And how things outside, fact or feigning,
teach

30 What good is and what evil, — just the
same,

Be feigning or be fact the teacher, — blame
Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge
My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.
All — for myself — seems ordered wise
and well

Inside it, — what reigns outside, who can
tell?

Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space
Which yields thee knowledge, — do its
bounds embrace

Well-willing and wise-working, each at
height?

Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite —

40 Back to thy circumscription!

"Back indeed!

Ending where I began — thus: retrocede,
Who will, — what comes first, take first,
I advise!

Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes
Look upward: this Andromeda of mine —

Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign
There's finer entertainment underneath.
Learn how they ministrate to life and
death —

Those incommensurably marvellous
Contrivances which furnish forth the house
Where soul has sway! Though Master
keep aloof,

Signs of His presence multiply from roof
To basement of the building. Look
around,

Learn thoroughly, — no fear that you con-
found

Master with message! He's away, no
doubt,

But what if, all at once, you come upon
A startling-proof — not that the Master
gone

Was present lately — but that something
— whence

Light comes — has pushed Him into resi-
dence?

Was such the symbol's meaning, — old,
uncouth —

That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth? 6
Only by looking low, ere looking high,
Comes penetration of the mystery."

XI.

Thanks! After sermonising, psalmody!
Now praise with pencil, Painter! Fools
attain

Your fame, forsooth, because its power in-
clines

To livelier colours, more attractive lines
Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint.

— Grey male emaciation, haply streaked
Carbuncle by scourgings — or they want,
far worse —

Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless 7
not curse

Nature that loved the form whereon hate
wreaked

The wrongs you see. No, rather paint
some full

Benignancy, the first and foremost boon
Of youth, health, strength, — show beauty's
May, ere June

Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull
— No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,

Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.
Show saintliness that's simply innocent

Of guessing sinnership exists to cure
All in good time! In time let age advance 8

And teach that knowledge helps — not
ignorance —

The healing of the nations. Let my spark
Quicken your tinder! Burn with — Joan
of Arc!

Not at the end, nor midway when there
grew

The brave delusions, when rare fancies
flew

Before the eyes, and in the ears of her
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:
No, — paint the peasant girl all peasant-
like,
Spirit and flesh — the hour about to strike
When this should be transfigured, that in-
flamed,
By heart's admonishing "Thy country
shamed,
Thy king shut out of all his realm except
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt
The indubitable lightning "Can there be
Country and king's salvation — all through
me?"

Memorise that burst's moment, Francis!
Tush —
None of the nonsense-writing! Fittler
brush
Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let
show
Not what the foolish feign but the wise
know —
Ask Sainte-Beuve¹ else! — or better,
Quicherat,²
The downright-digger into truth that's —
Bah,
Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus
much
Concerns you, that "of prudishness no
touch
From first to last defaced the maid; anon,
Camp-use compelling" — what says D'Al-
ençon
Her fast friend? — "though I saw while
she undressed
How fair she was — especially her breast —
Never had I a wild thought!" — as indeed
I nowise doubt. Much less would she take
heed —
When eve came, and the lake, the hills
around
Were all one solitude and silence, — found
Barriered impenetrably safe about, —
Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,
But quietly permit the air imbibe
Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the
scribe!

Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,
God's maid, this Joan,³ from the pool's edge
she spied
The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-
king:
And "Las," sighed she, "my Liege is such
a thing
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place
Out of his whole wide France: were mine
the grace
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"
Properly Martin-fisher — that's the word,

Not yours nor mine: folk said the rustic
oath
In common use with her was — "Py my 4:
troth"?
No, — "By my Martin"! Paint this!
Only, turn
Her face away — that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!
That task's beyond you. Finished, Fran-
cis? Wipe
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content!
"Omnia non omnibus" — no harm is
meant!

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE.

[Gerard de Lairese was a Flemish
painter, born at Liège in 1640; he died in
1711. He was a famous figure in his day,
extravagant and dissipated. He painted
rapidly, and was fond of the violin. He
was supposed to be the author of a treatise
on Painting which bears his name, but
some doubt this.]

I.

AH, but — because you were struck blind,
could bless
Your sense no longer with the actual view
Of man and woman, those fair forms you
drew
In happier days so duteously and true, — 53
Must I account my Gerard de Lairese
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too
— Was this no hardship? — from pro-
ducing, plain
To us who still have eyes, the pagantry
Which passed and passed before his busy
brain
And, captured on his canvas, showed our
sky
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked
with brood
Of monsters, — centaurs bestial, satyrs
lewd, —
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes 60
From the severe serene: or haply paced
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-
embraced,
Some early human kingly personage.
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age
Were still to be: nay, these indeed began —
Are not the pictures extant? — till the ban
Of blindness struck both palette from his
thumb
And pencil from his finger.

II.

Blind — not dumb,
Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels
stirred
With pity beyond pity: no, the word

¹ The famous French critic and *causeur*.

² A great authority on Joan of Arc.

³ Mr. Browning's son has painted a picture
of Joan bathing.

Was left upon your unmolested lips:
 Your mouth unsealed, despite of 'eyes'
 eclipse,
 Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I
 lack
 Somehow the heart to wish your practice
 back
 Which boasted hand's achievement in a
 score
 Of veritable pictures, less or more,
 Still to be seen: myself have seen them, —
 moved
 To pay due homage to the man I loved
 Because of that prodigious book he wrote
 10 On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,
 Making acquaintance with his artist-work.
 So my youth's piety obtained success
 Of 'all-too dubious sort: for, though it irk
 To tell the issue, few or none would guess
 From extant lines and colours, De Lairese,
 Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped
 And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged
 Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.
 Bearded experience bears not to be duped
 20 Like boyish fancy: 'twas a boy that budged
 No foot's breadth from your visioned steps
 away
 The while that memorable "Walk" he
 trudged
 In your companionship, — the Book must
 say
 Where, when and whither, — "Walk,"
 come what come may,
 No measurer of steps on this our globe
 Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus'
 robe,
 And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price:
 But — oh, your piece of sober sound advice
 That artists should descry abundant worth
 30 In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth
 If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied
 In vulgar town and country! Why
 despond
 Because hemmed round by Dutch canals?
 Beyond
 The ugly actual, lo, on every side
 Imagination's limitless domain
 Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds
 and sights
 Ripe to be realised by poet's brain
 Acting on painter's brush! "Ye doubt?
 Poor sights,
 What if I set example, go before,
 40 While you come after, and we both explore
 Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to
 note
 Objects whereto my pupils may devote
 Attention with advantage?"

III.

So commenced

That "Walk" amid true wonders — none
 to you,

But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,
 Purlblind, while plain could proper optics
 view
 In that old sepulchre by lightning split,
 Whereof the lid bore carven, — any dolt
 Imagines why, — Jove's very thunderbolt:
 You who could straight perceive, by glance
 at it,
 This tomb must needs be Phaeton's! In
 a trice,
 Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,
 Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up
 sand,
 A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device:
 What other than the Chariot of the Sun
 Ever let drop the like? Consult the
 tome —¹
 I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home —
 For greater still surprise the while that
 "Walk"
 Went on and on, to end as it begun,
 Choke-full of chances, changes, every one
 No whit less wondrous. What was there
 to baulk
 Us, who had eyes, from seeing? You with
 none
 Missed not a marvel: wherefore? Let us
 talk.

IV.

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved
 your mind,
 Free from obstruction, to compassionate
 Art's power left powerless, and supply the
 blind
 With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.
 Mind could invent things, and to — take
 away,
 At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base
 Which vex the sight that cannot say them
 nay
 But, where mind plays the master, have no
 place.
 And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,
 All except beauty from its mustered tribe
 Of objects apparitional which lure
 Painter to show and poet to describe —
 That imagery of the antique song
 Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-
 birth
 Conceived mid clouds in Greece, could
 glance along
 Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,
 As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng
 About our paces men and women worth
 Nowise a glance — so poets apprehend —
 Since nought avails portraying them in
 verse:
 While painters turn upon the heel, intend
 To spare their work the critic's ready curse
 Due to the daily and undignified.

¹ *The Art of Painting, etc.*, by Gerard de
 Lairese. Translated by J. F. Fritsch, 1778.

v.

I who myself contentedly abide
 Awake, nor want the wings of dream, —
 who tramp
 Earth's common surface, rough, smooth,
 dry or damp,
 — I understand alternatives, no less
 — Conceive **your** soul's leap, Gerard de
 Lairese!
 How were it could I mingle false with true,
 Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?
 Advantage would it prove or detriment
 If I saw double? Could I gaze intent
 On Dryope plucking the blossoms red,
 As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and
 bled,
 Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake
 Having and holding nature for the sake
 Of nature only — nymph and lote-tree thus
 Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous,
 Apple of English homesteads, where I see
 Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling
 bee
 Uncrumples, caught by sweet he clambers
 through?
 Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,
 Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply
 true,
 Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency
 By help of feignings proper to the page —
 Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder
 age
 Put colour, poetising — poured rich life
 On what were else a dead ground — noth-
 ingness —
 Until the solitary world grew rife
 With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs.
 Yes,
 The reason was, fancy composed the strife
 'Twixt sense and soul: for sense, my De
 Lairese,
 Cannot content itself with outward things,
 Mere beauty: soul must needs know
 whence there springs —
 How, when and why — what sense but
 loves, nor lists
 To know at all.

vi.

Not one of man's acquits
 Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks:
 So, point me out which was it of the links
 Snapt first, from out the chain which used
 to bind
 Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since
 blind,
 Subsisted still efficient and intact?
 Oh, we can fancy too! but somehow fact
 Has got to — say, not so much push aside
 Fancy, as to declare its place supplied
 By fact unscen but no less fact the same,
 Which mind bids sense accept. Is mind
 to blame,
 Or sense, — does that usurp, this abdicate?

First of all, as you "walked" — were it too
 late

For us to walk, if so we willed? Confess
 We have the sober feet still, De Lairese!
 Why not the freakish brain too, that must
 needs

Supplement nature — not see flowers and
 weeds

Simply as such, but link with each and all
 The ultimate perfection — what we call
 Rightly enough the human shape divine?
 The rose? No rose unless it disentwine
 From Venus' wreath the while she bends
 to kiss

Her deathly love?

vii.

Plain retrogression, this!

No, no: we poets go not back at all:

What you did we could do — from great
 to small

Sinking assuredly: if this world last

One moment longer when Man finds its
 Past

Exceed its Present — blame the Protoplast! 6a
 If we no longer see as you of old,

'Tis we see deeper. Progress for the bold!

You saw the body, 'tis the soul we see.

Try now! Bear witness while you walk
 with me,

I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace,
 'Tis that you stand still, I conclude the race

Without your company. Come, walk once
 more

The "Walk": if I to-day as you of yore
 See just like you the blind — then sight

shall cry
 — The whole long day quite gone through 7a
 — victory!

viii.

Thunders on thunders, doubling and re-
 doubling

Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp
 white fire

Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage,
 troubling

Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire
 Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire

Crashed down, defiant to the last: till —
 lo,

The motive of the malice! — all aglow,
 Circled with flame there yawned a sudden
 rift

I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect
 Front and defy the outrage, while — as 8a
 checked,

Chidden, beside him dauntless in the
 drift —

Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing
 outspread

In deprecation o'er the crouching head
 Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.

O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile

Was it when this — Jove's feathered fury
 — slipped
 Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence
 he ripped —
 This eagle-hound — neither reproach nor
 prayer —
 Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear
 Fate's secret from thy safeguard, — was it
 then
 That all these thunders rent earth, ruined
 air
 To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men?
 He thundered, — to withdraw, as beast to
 lair,
 Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.
 10 Gather the night again about thee now,
 Hate on, love ever! Morn is breaking
 there —
 The granite ridge pricks through the mist,
 turns gold
 As wrong turns right. O laughter mani-
 fold
 Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!

IX.

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
 Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree
 Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
 And every strangled branch resumes its
 right
 To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging
 dregs, waves free
 20 In dripping glory. Prone the runnels
 plunge,
 While earth, distent with moisture like a
 sponge,
 Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem
 to see,
 Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I
 known
 The torrent now turned river? — masterful
 Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage —
 stone
 And stub which barred the froths and
 foams: no bull
 Ever broke bounds in formidable sport
 . More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm
 Sets him to dare that last mad leap: report
 30 Who may — his fortunes in the deathly
 chasm
 That swallows him in silence! Rather
 turn
 Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled
 Into the broad day-splendour, whom dis-
 cern
 These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly
 called
 Moon-maid in heaven above and, here
 below,
 Earth's huntress-queen? I note the garb
 succinct
 Saving from smirch that purity of snow
 From breast to knee — snow's self with
 just the tinct

Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah,
 the bow
 Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where,
 ivory-linked
 Horn curving blends with horn, a moon-
 like pair
 Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling
 so —
 As if a star's live restless fragment winked
 Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair
 What hope along the hillside, what far bliss
 Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they
 kiss
 Those lucid shoulders? Must a morn so
 blithe,
 Needs have its sorrow when the twang and
 hiss
 Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft
 makes writhe
 Its victim, thou unerring Artemis?
 Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark
 Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed
 Was bred of liquid marble in the dark
 Depths of the mountain's womb which ever
 teemed
 With novel births of wonder? Not one
 spark
 Of pity in that steel-grey glance which
 gleamed
 At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped
 Idly the granite? Let me glide unseen
 From thy proud presence: well mayst thou
 be queen
 Of all those strange and sudden deaths
 which damped
 So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit
 For happy marriage till the maidens paled
 And perished on the temple-step, assailed
 By — what except to envy must man's wit
 Impute that sure implacable release
 Of life from warmth and joy? But death
 means peace.

X.

Noon is the conqueror, — not a spray, no
 leaf,
 Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up
 Its morning dew: the valley seemed one
 cup
 Of cloud-smoke, but the vapour's reign
 was brief,
 Sun-smitten, see, it hangs — the filmy
 haze —
 Grey-garmenting the herbless mountain-
 side,
 To soothe the day's sharp glare: while far
 and wide
 Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze
 With fierce immitigable blue, no bird
 Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of
 peaks
 Which still presume there, plain each pale
 point speaks
 In wan transparency of waste incurred

By over-daring: far from me be such!
 Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine
 Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade
 and cool
 The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
 Edged round with mossy fringing soft and
 fine.
 Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
 Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-
 tree
 And one beneficent rich barberry
 Jewelled all over with fruit-pendants red.
 What have I seen! O Satyr, well I know
 How sad thy case, and what a world of woe
 Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed
 Only for mirth: who otherwise could
 think —
 Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's
 brink,
 Thine eyes a-swim with merriment un-
 named
 But haply guessed at by their furtive wink?
 And all the while a heart was panting sick
 Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy
 breast —
 Passion it was that made those breath-
 bursts thick
 I took for mirth subsiding into rest.
 So, it was Lyda — she of all the train
 Of forest-thridding nymphs, — 'twas only
 she
 Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,
 Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,
 And, from her circling sisters, mocked a
 pain
 Echo had pitied — whom Pan loved in
 vain —
 For she was wishful to partake thy glee,
 Mimic thy mirth — who loved her not
 again,
 Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches
 there —
 Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid
 Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware
 Thy steps have traced her to the briary
 glade,
 Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling
 lair,
 Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid!

XI.

Now, what should this be for? The sun's
 decline
 Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act
 Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact
 Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine
 About to alter earth's conditions, packed
 With fate for nature's self that waits, aware
 What mischief unsuspected in the air
 Menaces momentarily a cataract.
 Therefore it is that yonder space extends
 Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,
 Shrub, weed well nigh; they keep their
 bounds, leave free

The platform for what actors? Foes or
 friends,
 Here come they trooping silent: heaven
 suspends
 Purpose the while they range themselves.
 I see!
 Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree
 This present and no after-contest ends 50
 One or the other's grasp at rule in reach
 Over the race of man — host fronting host,
 As statue statue fronts — wrath-molten
 each,
 Solidified by hate, — earth halved almost,
 To close once more in chaos. Yet two
 shapes
 Show prominent, each from the universe
 Of minions round about him, that disperse
 Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt es-
 capes.
 Who flames first? Macedonian is it thou?
 Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, 60
 drapes
 His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

XII.

What, then the long day dies at last?
 Abrupt
 The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to
 melt
 Our mountain ridge, is mastered: black
 the belt
 Of westward crags, his gold could not
 corrupt,
 Barriers again the valley, lets the flow
 Of lavish glory waste itself away
 — Whither? For new climes, fresh eyes
 breaks the day!
 Night was not to be baffled. If the glow
 Were all that's gone from us! Did clouds, 70
 afloat
 So filmily but now, discard no rose,
 Sombre throughout the fleeciness that
 grows
 A sullen uniformity. I note
 Rather displeasure, — in the overspread
 Change from the swim of gold to one pale
 lead
 Oppressive to malevolence, — than late
 Those amorous yearnings when the aggre-
 gate
 Of cloudlets pressed that each and all
 might save
 Its passion and partake in relics red
 Of day's bequeathment: now, a frown 80
 instead
 Estranges, and affrights who needs must
 fare
 On and on till his journey ends: but
 where?
 Caucasus? Lost now in the night. Away
 And far enough lies that Arcadia.
 The human heroes tread the world's dark
 way
 No longer. Yet I dimly see almost —

Yes, for my last adventure! 'Tis a ghost.
So drops away the beauty! There he
stands
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating
hands.

XIII.

- Enough! Stop further fooling, De
Laisse!
My fault, not yours! Some fitter way
express
Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed
Is past, gives way before Life's best and
last,
The all-including Future! What were life
Did soul stand still therein, forego her
strife
- 10 Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
Of some all-reconciling Future? Soul,
Nothing has been which shall not bettered
be
Hereafter, — leave the root, by law's
decree
Whence springs the ultimate and perfect
tree!
Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay,
climb —
Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower —
reach, rest sublime
Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!
O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower
away,
Intent on progress? No whit more than
stop
- 20 Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top
Sufficiency of yield by interposed
Twistwork bold foot gets free from.
Wherefore glozed
The poets — "Dream afresh old godlike
shapes,
Recapture ancient fable that escapes,
Push back reality, repeople earth
With vanished falseness, recognise no
worth
In fact new-born unless 'tis rendered back
Pallid by fancy, as the western rack
Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some
gleam
- 30 Of its gone glory!"

XIV.

Let things be — not seem,
I counsel rather, — do, and nowise dream!
Earth's young significance is all to learn:
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost,
forsooth!
What was the best Greece babbled of as
truth?
"A shade, a wretched nothing, — sad,
thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,
If hand have haply spring'd o'er the
dead

Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth
red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice:
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn
ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at
length
The last faint flutter craving — not for
strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
O'er men that made life life indeed." Sad
school
Was Hades! Gladly, — might the dead
but slink
To life back, — to the dregs once more
would drink
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup
Fate mixes for humanity.

XV.

Cheer up, —
Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
Of Man's calamities the last and worst:
Take it so! By proved potency that still
Makes perfect, be assured, come what
come will,
What once lives never dies — what here
attains
To a beginning, has no end, still gains
And never loses aught: when, where, and
how —
Lies in Law's lap. What's death then?
Even now
With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
Brief interposing ignorance? Is care
For a creation found at fault just there —
There where the heart breaks bond and
outruns time,
To reach, not follow what shall be?

XVI.

Here's rhyme
Such as one makes now, — say, when
Spring repeats
That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets:
"Spring for the tree and herb — no Spring
for us!"
Let Spring come: why, a man salutes her
thus:

Dance, yellows and whites and reds, —
Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds!

There's sunshine; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard
wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine
mellows:

Dance you, reds and whites and yellows!

WITH CHARLES AVISON.

* [See "Dictionary of National Biography," vol. ii. Charles Avison was born at Newcastle in 1710 (?), and died there in 1770. He was organist of St. Nicholas' Church. He published in 1752 "An Essay on Musical Expression," which attracted much notice, and is still respected. Avison preferred the French and Italian schools of music to the German.]

I.

How strange! — but, first of all, the little
fact
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter
morn
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn
Of garden-ground beneath my window,
backed
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper,
tacked
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent
and racked
By five months' cruel winter, — showed no
torn
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left
to Bare even of the bones which used to be
Warm wrappage, safe embracement: this
one cleft —
— O what a life and beauty filled it up
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay
cup
Ran over with poured bright wine! 'Twas
a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize,
deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake:
gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might
and main —
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told
the tale
to To thee, — no townsman but born orchard-
thief, —
That here — surpassing moss-tuft, beard
from sheaf
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long
and stout,
All proper country-pillage — here, no
doubt,
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy
nest
Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and
cling,
Hang parrot-wise to bough, these black-
caps! Strange
Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch

Should stray so far to forage: at a pinch, 34
Was not the fine wool's self within his
range
— Filchings on every fence? But no: the
need
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
New-suited to what scheming finch would
breed
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

II.

Yet — by the first pink blossom on the
larch! —
This was scarce stranger than that
memory, —
In want of what should cheer the stay-at-
home,
My soul, — must straight clap pinion, well 40
nigh roam
A century back, nor once close plume,
descry
The appropriate rag to plunder, till she
pounced —
Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?
What old-world work proved forage for
the bill
Of memory the far-flyer? "March" an-
nounced,
I verily believe, the dead and gone
Name of a music-maker: one of such
In England as did little or did much,
But, doing, had their day once. Avison!
Singly and solely for an air of thine, 50
Bold-stepping "March," foot stept to ere
my hand
Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the
band
Of majesties familiar, to decline
On thee — not too conspicuous on the list
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft
desire —
Thou, whilom of Newcastle organist!

III.

So much could one — well, thinnish air
effect.
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled
"Grand,"
Did veritably seem to grow, expand, 60
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching,
slow and sure,
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,
From nowhere into nowhere, — out they
came,
Onward they passed, and in they went.
No lure
Of novel modulation pricked the flat
Forthright persisting melody, — no hint
That discord, sound asleep beneath the
flint,

— Struck — might spring spark-like, claim
 due tit-for-tat,
 Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such
 the night
 Of quietude's immutability,
 That somehow coldness gathered warmth,
 well nigh
 Quickened — which could not be! — grew
 burning bright
 With life-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-
 blare,
 To drum-accentuation: pacing turned
 Striding, and striding grew gigantic,
 spurned
 At last the narrow space 'twixt earth and
 air,
 10 So shook me back into my sober self.

IV.

And where woke I? The March had set
 me down
 There whence I plucked the measure, as
 his brown
 Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great
 John Relfe,
 Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,
 It little needed thy consummate skill
 To fity figure such a bass! The key
 Was — should not memory play me false
 — well, C.
 Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple
 Time,
 Three crotchets to a bar: no change, I
 grant,
 20 Except from Tonic down to Dominant.
 And yet — and yet — if I could put in
 rhyme
 The manner of that marching! — which
 had stopped
 — I wonder, where? — but that my weak
 self dropped
 From out the ranks, to rub eyes disen-
 tranced
 And feel that, after all the way advanced,
 Back must I foot it, I and my com-
 peers,
 Only to reach, across a hundred years,
 The bandsman Avison whose little book
 And large tune thus had led me the long
 way
 30 (As late a rag my blackcap) from to-
 day
 And to-day's music-manufacture, —
 Brahms,
 Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, — to where —
 trumpets, shawns,
 Show yourselves joyfull! — Handel reigns
 — supreme?
 By no means! Buononcini's work is
 theme
 For fit laudation of the impartial few:
 (We stand in England, mind you!)
 Fashion too

Favours Geminiani! — of those choice
 Concertos: nor there wants a certain voice
 Raised in thy favour likewise, famed
 Pepusch?
 Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a
 bush
 Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing
 beats
 While Greenway trilled "Alexis." Such
 were feats
 Of music in thy day — dispute who list —
 Avison, of Newcastle organist!

V.

And here's your music all alive once
 more
 As once it was alive, at least: just so
 The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
 Attest — such people, years and years ago,
 Looked thus when outside death had life
 below,
 — Could say "We are now," not "We
 were of yore,"
 "Feel how our pulses leap!" and not
 "Expire —
 Explain why quietude has settled o'er
 Surface once all-aw-^{rk}!" Ay, such a
 "Suite"
 Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue"
 would catch
 Soul heavenwards up, when time was:
 why attach
 Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no
 match
 For fresh achievement? Feat once —
 ever feat!
 How can completion grow still more com-
 plete?
 Hear Avison? He tenders evidence
 That music in his day as much absorbed
 Heart and soul then as Wagner's music
 now.
 Perfect from centre to circumference —
 Orbed to the full can be but fully orbed:
 And yet — and yet — whence comes it
 that "O Thou" —
 Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus —
 Will not again take wing and fly away
 (Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
 In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
 Even by Handel's help!

VI.

I state it thus:
 There is no truer truth obtainable
 By Man than comes of music. "Soul"
 — (accept
 A word which vaguely names what no
 adept

* An Italian fiddler, who came to London in
 1714.

* A German musician, organist at the Charter
 House; died 1752.

In word-use fits and fixes so that still
 Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
 Innominate as first, yet, free again,
 Is no less recognised the absolute
 Fact underlying that same other fact
 Concerning which no cavil can dispute
 Our nomenclature when we call it
 "Mind" —
 Something not Matter) — "Soul," who
 seeks shall find
 Distinct beneath that something. You
 exact
 to An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII.

We see a work: the worker works behind,
 Invisible himself. Suppose his act
 Be to o'erarch a gulf: he digs, transports,
 Shapes and, through enginery — all sizes,
 sorts,
 Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
 Proves our bridged causeway. So works
 Mind — by stress
 Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,
 Builds up our solid knowledge: all the
 same,
 Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not
 tame,
 to An element which works beyond our guess,
 Soul, the unsounded sea — whose lift of
 surge,
 Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
 In flower and foam, Feeling from out the
 deeps
 Mind arrogates no mastery upon —
 Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
 To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from
 rough
 Mind's flooring, — operosity enough?
 Still the successive labour of each inch,
 Who lists may learn: from the last turn of
 winch
 to That let the polished slab-stone find its
 place,
 To the first prod of pick-axe at the base
 Of the unquarried mountain, — what was
 all
 Mind's varied process except natural,
 Nay, easy, even, to descry, describe,
 After our fashion? "So worked Mind: its
 tribe
 Of senses ministrant above, below,
 Far, near, or now or haply long ago
 Brought to pass knowledge." But Soul's
 sea, — drawn whence,
 Fed how, forced whither, — by what evi-
 dence
 to Of ebb and flow, that's felt beneath the
 tread,
 Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work
 overhead, —
 Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of
 Soul?

Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless
 roll
 This side and that, except to emulate
 Stability above? To match and mate
 Feeling with knowledge, — make as mani-
 fest
 Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as
 rest,
 Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that
 rise and sink
 Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and
 wink,
 A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread 54
 Whitening the wave, — to strike all this
 life dead,
 Run mercury into a mould like lead,
 And henceforth have the plain result to
 show —
 How we Feel, hard and fast as what we
 Know —
 This were the prize and is the puzzle! —
 which
 Music essays to solve: and here's the hitch
 That baulks her of full triumph else to
 boast.

VIII.

All Arts endeavour this, and she the most
 Attains thereto, yet fails of touching:
 why?
 Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's 60
 ministry?
 What's known once is known ever: Arts
 arrange,
 Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
 Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or
 deep
 Construct their bravest, — still such pains
 produce
 Change, not creation: simply what lay
 loose
 At first lies firmly after, what design
 Was faintly traced in hesitating line
 Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
 Henceforth and evermore. Now, could
 we shoot
 Liquidity into a mould, — some way 70
 Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
 Unalterably still the forms that leap
 To life for once by help of Art! — which
 years
 To save its capture: Poetry discerns,
 Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and
 fall,
 Bursting, subsidence, intermixture — all
 A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art
 a-strain
 Would stay the apparition, — nor in vain:
 The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and
 swift
 Colour-and-line-throw — proud the prize 80
 they lift!
 Thus felt Man and thus looked Man, —
 passions caught

I' the midway swim of sea, — not much, if
 aught,
 Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and
 fears,
 Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet
 the years,
 And still the Poet's page holds Helena
 At gaze from topmost Troy — "But where
 are they,
 My brothers, in the armament I name
 Hero by hero? Can it be that shame
 For their lost sister holds them from the
 war?"
 — Knowing not they already slept afar
 10 Each of them in his own dear native land.
 Still on the Painter's fresco, from the
 hard
 Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
 She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
 Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper
 yet,
 Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-
 net, —
 The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous
 thing
 Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
 With limbs' play and life's semblance!
 There it lies,
 Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
 20 And marvels, most to love and laud thee
 for!
 Save it from chance and change we most
 abhor!
 Give momentary feeling permanence,
 So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
 Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
 The Painter's Eve, the Poet's Helena,
 Still rapturously bend, afar still throw
 The wistful gaze! Thanks, Homer,
 Angelo!
 Could Music rescue thus from Soul's
 profound,
 Give feeling immortality by sound,
 30 Then were she queenliest of Arts! Alas —
 As well expect the rainbow not to pass!
 "Praise 'Radaminta'¹ — love attains
 therein
 To perfect utterance! Pity — what shall
 win
 Thy secret like 'Rinaldo'?"¹ — so men
 said:
 Once all was perfume — now, the flower
 is dead —
 They spied tints, sparks have left the spar!
 Love, hate,
 Joy, fear, survive, — alike importunate
 As ever to go walk the world again,
 Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
 40 Till Music loose them, fit each filimly
 With form enough to know and name it by
 For any recogniser sure of ken
 And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen

¹ Operas by Handel.

Of earth than needs be. Nor to such
 appeal
 Is Music long obdurate: off they steal —
 How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms!
 back come they
 Full-blooded with new crimson of broad
 day —
 Passion made palpable once more. Ye
 look
 Your last on Handel? Gaze your first on
 Gluck!
 Why wistful search, O waning ones, the 50
 chart
 Of stars for you while Haydn, while
 Mozart
 Occupies heaven? These also, fanned to
 fire,
 Flamboyant wholly, — so perfections
 tire, —
 Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others
 note
 The ever-new invasion!

IX.

I devote
 Rather my modicum of parts to use
 What power may yet avail to re-infuse
 (In fancy, please you!) sleep that looks
 like death
 With momentary liveliness, lend breath
 To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe, 60
 An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
 Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
 Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and
 drop
 Of dusts and dews a many thou didst
 shrine
 Each in its right receptacle, assign
 To each its proper office, letter large
 Label and label, then with solemn charge,
 Reviewing learnedly the list complete
 Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
 Push down the same to me, attent below, 70
 Power in abundance: armed wherewith
 I go
 To play the enlivener. Bring good antique
 stuff!
 Was it alight once? Still lives spark
 enough
 For breath to quicken, run the smoulder-
 ing ash
 Red right-through. What, "stone-dead"
 were fools so rash
 As style my Avison, because he lacked
 Modern appliance, spread out phrase un-
 raked
 By modulations fit to make each hair
 Stiffen upon his wig? See there — and
 there!
 I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast 80
 Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
 Melody's easy-going, jostle law
 With licence, modulate (no Bach in awe),
 Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank),

And lo, upstart the flamelets, — what was
 blank
 Turns scarlet, purple, crimson! Straight-
 way scanned
 By eyes that like new lustre — Love once
 more
 Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as
 before
 Rages in the Rubato: e'en thy March,
 My Avison, which, sooth to say — (ne'er
 arch
 Eyebrows in anger!) — timed, in Georgian
 years
 The step precise of British Grenadiers
 To such a nicety, — if score I crowd,
 If rhythm I break, if beats I vary, — tap
 At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-
 clap,
 Ever the pace augmented till — what's
 here?
 Titanic striding toward Olympus!

X.

Fear

No such irreverent innovation! Still
 Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will —
 Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
 The due three-parts dispensed with!

XI.

This alone

Comes of my tiresome talking: Music's
 throne
 Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
 And whom in turn — by who knows what
 new feats
 Of strength, — shall somebody as sure
 push down,
 Consign him dispossessed of sceptre,
 crown,
 And orb imperial — whereto? — Never
 dream
 That what once lived shall ever die!
 They seem
 Dead — do they? lapsed things lost in
 limbo? Bring
 Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each
 king
 Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head
 to foot
 No inch that is not Purcell! Wherefore?
 (Suit
 Measure to subject, first — no marching on
 Yet in thy bold C Major, Avison,
 As suited step a minute since: no: wait —
 Into the minor key first modulate —
 Gently with A, now — in the Lesser
 Third!)

XII.

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
 By Man through buying knowledge, this
 were worst:

That he should find his last gain prove his
 first
 Was futile — merely nescience absolute,
 Not knowledge in the bud which holds a
 fruit
 Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-
 tide,
 Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide, 40
 And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect
 ripe, —
 Not this, — but ignorance, a blur to wipe
 From human records, late it graced so
 much.
 "Truth — this attainment? Ah, but such
 and such
 Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable
 When we attained them! E'en as they,
 so will
 This their successor have the due morn,
 noon,
 Evening and night — just as an old-world
 tune
 Wears out and drops away, until who hears
 Smilingly questions — 'This it was brought 50
 tears
 Once to all eyes, — this roused heart's rap-
 ture once?'
 So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
 Styles itself truth perennial: 'ware its wile!
 Knowledge turns nescience, — foremost on
 the file,
 Simply proves first of our delusions."

XIII.

Now —

Blare it forth, bold C Major! Lift thy
 brow,
 Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
 With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed —
 Man knowing — he who nothing knew!
 As Hope,
 Fear, Joy, and Grief, — though ampler 60
 stretch and scope
 They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh
 phrase, —
 Were equally existent in far days
 Of Music's dim beginning — even so,
 Truth was at full within thee long ago,
 Alive as now it takes what latest shape
 May startle thee by strangeness. Truths
 escape
 Time's insufficient garniture: they fade,
 They fall — those sheathings now grown
 sere, whose aid
 Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved
 fine
 And free through March frost: May dews 70
 crystalline
 Nourish truth merely, — does June boast
 the fruit
 As — not new vesture merely but, to boot,
 Novel creation? Soon shall fade and fall
 Myth after myth — the husk-like lies I
 call

New truth's corolla-safeguard: Autumn
comes,
So much the better!

XIV.

Therefore — bang the drums,
Blow the trumpets, Avison! March-
motive? that's
Truth which en^dures r setting. Sharps
and flats,
Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy
score
When ophicleide and bombard...s uproar
Mate the approaching trample, even now
Big in the distance — or my ears deceive —
Of federated England, fitly weave
to March-music for the Future!

XV.

Or suppose

Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
Once more some sable-stoled procession —
say,
From Little-ease to Tyburn — wends its
way,
Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
Of half-a-dozen recusants — this day
Three hundred years ago! How duly
drones
Elizabethan plain-song — dim antique
Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly
wreak
to A classic vengeance on thy March! It
moans —
Larges and Longs and Breves displacing
quite
Crotchet-and-quaver pertness — brushing
bars
Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI.

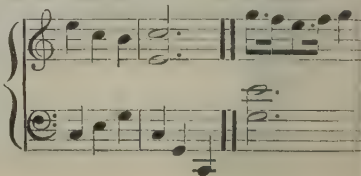
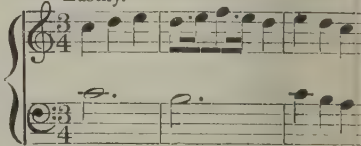
Nor night nor day: one purpose move us
both,
Be thy mood mine! As thou wast minded,
Man's
The cause our music champions: I were
loth
To think we cheered our troop to Preston
Pans
Ignobly: back to times of England's best!
to Parliament stands for privilege — life and
limb
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden,
Pym,
The famous Five: There's rumour of
arrest.
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark!
They protest:
Shall we not all join chorus? Hark the
hymn,
— Rough, rude, robustious — homely heart
a-throb,

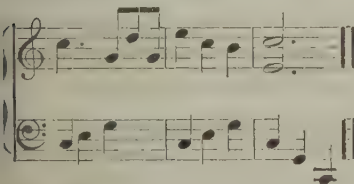
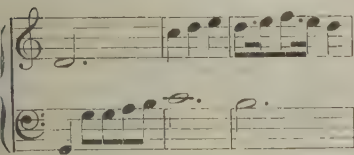
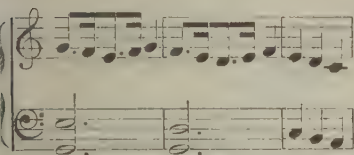
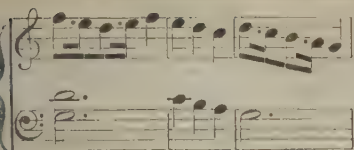
Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob!
How good is noise! what's silence but
despair
Of making sound match gladness never
there?
Give me some great glad "subject," glo-
rious Bach,
Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack! 10
Join in, give voice robustious rude and
rough, —
Avison helps — so heart lend noise enough!
Fife, trump, drum, sound! and singers
then,
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men!"
Up, heads, your proudest — out, throats,
your loudest —
"Somerset's Pym!"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen!"
Wail, the foes he quelled, — hail, the friends
he held,
"Tavistock's Pym!" 50

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the
pen
Teach babes unborn the where and when
— Tyrants, he braved them, — patriots,
he saved them —
"Westminster's Pym!"

Lustily.





FUST AND HIS FRIENDS.

AN EPILOGUE

[Fust or Faust was a German printer, and a partner of Gutenberg from about 1450 to 1455. On the dissolution of the partnership, Fust carried on the business with his son-in-law, Peter Schöffer. Whether Fust was really the inventor of the movable types, is uncertain.]

Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457.

FIRST FRIEND.

Up, up, up — next step of the staircase
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread!

SECOND FRIEND.

Locked and barred?

THIRD FRIEND.

Door open — the rare case!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Ay, there he leans — lost wretch!

FIFTH FRIEND.

His head
Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread!

SIXTH FRIEND.

Hallo, — wake, man, ere God thunder-
strike Mayence
— Mulct for thy sake who art Satan's,
John Fust!

Satan installed here, God's rule in abey-
ance,
Mayence some morning may crumble to
dust.

Answer our questions thou shalt and thou
must!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Softly and fairly! Wherefore a-gloom?
Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib!
Raise the forlorn brow, Fust! Make
room —

Let daylight through arms which, en-
folding thee, crib
From those clenched lids the comfort of
sunshine!

FIRST FRIEND.

So glib

Thy tongue slides to "comfort" already?
Not mine!

Behoves us deal roundly: the wretch
is distraught
— Too well I guess wherefore! Behoves
a Divine

— Such as I, by grace, boast me — to
threaten one caught

In the enemy's toils, — setting "comfort" ²⁰
at nought.

SECOND FRIEND.

Nay, Brother, so hasty? I heard — nor
long since —

Of a certain Black Artsman who, —
helplessly bound

By rash pact with Satan, — through pay
ing — why mince

The matter? — fit price to the Church,
— safe and sound
Full a year after death in his grave-clothes
was found.

Whereas 'tis notorious the Fiend claims his
due

During lifetime, — comes clawing, with
talons aflame,
The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking
and blue:

So it happed with John Faust; lest John
Fust fare the same, —
Look up, I adjure thee by God's holy
name!

For neighbours and friends — no foul hell-
brood flock we!

Saith Solomon "Words of the wise are
as goads:"

Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set
free

Soul and sense from death's drowse.

FIRST FRIEND.

And soul, wakened, unloads
Much sin by confession: no mere palinodes!

—"I was youthful and wanton, am old yet
no sage:

When angry I cursed, struck and slew:
did I want?

Right and left did I rob: though no war I
dared wage

With the Church (God forbid!) — harm
her least ministrant —

Still I outraged all else. Now that
strength is grown scant,

I am probity's self" — no such bleatings
as these!

But avowal of guilt so enormous, it
balks

Tongue's telling. Yet penitence prompt
may appease

God's wrath at thy bond with the Devil
who stalks

— Strides hither to strangle thee!

FUST.

Childhood so talks.

Not rare wit nor ripe age — ye boast them,
my neighbours! —

Should lay such a charge on your towns-
man, this Fust

Who, known for a life spent in pleasures
and labours

If freakish yet venial, could scarce be
induced

To traffic with fiends.

FIRST FRIEND.

So, my words have unloosed

A plie from those pale lips corrugate but
now?

FUST.

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to sur-
mise.

FIRST FRIEND.

To surmise? to establish! Unbury that
brow!

Look up, that thy judge may read clear
in thine eyes!

SECOND FRIEND.

By your leave, Brother Barnabite! Mine
to advise!

— Who arraign thee, John Fust! What
was bruited erewhile

Now bellows through Mayence. All
cry — thou hast trucked

Salvation away for lust's solace! Thy
smile

Takes its hue from hell's smoulder!

FUST.

Too certain! I sucked
— Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND.

Thou hast ducked —

Art drowned there, say rather! Faugh —
fleshly disport!

How else but by help of Sir Belial didst
win

That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy
sort

Could lure to become his accomplice
in sin?

Folk nicknamed her Helen of Troy!

FIRST FRIEND.

Best begin

At the very beginning. Thy father, — all
knew,

A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST.

Who knew him,
perchance may know this —

He dying left much gold and jewels no few:
Whom these help to court with but sel-
dom shall miss

The love of a leman: true witchcraft, I
wis!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost flout me? 'Tis said, in debauchery's
 guild
 Admitted prime guttler and guzzler —
 O swine! —
 To honour thy headship, those tosspots so
 swilled
 That out of their table there sprouted
 a vine
 Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting
 thy sign
 To out knife, off mouthful: when — who
 could suppose
 Such malice in magic? — each sot woke
 and found
 Cold steel but an inch from the neighbour's
 red nose
 He took for a grape-bunch!

FUST.

Does that so astound
 Sagacity such as ye boast, — who sur-
 round

Your mate with eyes staring, hairs stand-
 ing erect
 At his magical feats? Are good burgh-
 ers unversed
 In the humours of toping? Full oft, I sus-
 pect,
 Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin
 their first,
 And reckon a groat every guilder dis-
 bursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast
 brimmed
 Their glass with rare tipples' enticement,
 should gloat
 — Befooled and befuddled — through
 optics drink-dimmed —
 On this draught and that, till each found
 in his throat
 Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphael?
 For, note —

They fancied — their fuddling deceived
 them so grossly —
 That liquor sprang out of the table itself
 Through gimlet-holes drilled there, — nor
 noticed now closely
 The skinker kept plying my guests, from
 the shelf
 O'er their heads, with the potable madness.
 No elf

Had need to persuade them a vine rose
 umbrageous,
 Fruit - bearing, thirst - quenching!
 Enough! I confess
 To many such fool-pranks, but none so
 outrageous

That Satan was called in to help me:
 excess
 I own to, I grieve at — no more and no 30
 less.

SECOND FRIEND.

Strange honours were heaped on thee —
 medal for breast,
 Chain for neck, sword for thigh: not a
 lord of the land
 But acknowledged thee peer! What am-
 bition possessed
 A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime
 on his hand,
 To seek such associates?

FUST.

Spare taunts! Understand —

I submit me! 'Of vanities under the sun,
 Pride seized me at last as concupiscence
 first,
 Crapulosity ever: true Fiends, everyone,
 Haled this way and that my poor soul:
 thus amerced —
 Forgive and forget me!

44

FIRST FRIEND.

Had flesh sinned the worst,

Yet help were in counsel: the Church could
 absolve:
 But say not men truly thou barredst
 escape
 By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND.

On me must devolve
 The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

Shall Barnabites ape
 Us Dominican experts?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, Masters, — agape

When Hell yawns for a soul, 'tis myself
 claim the task
 Of extracting, by just one plain ques-
 tion, God's truth!
 Where's Peter Genesheim thy partner?
 I ask
 Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the
 pale youth
 Slaves tongue-tied — thy trade brooks no 50
 tattling forsooth!

No less he, thy *fantulus*, suffers entrap-
 ping,
 Succumbs to good fellowship: barrel
 a-broach

Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping:

Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare approach,

Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach."

He prattles, we profit: in brief, he assures
Thou hast taught him to speak so that
all men may hear

— Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Moors,

The same as we Christians — speech heard far and near

At one and the same magic moment!

FUST.

That's clear!

Said he — how?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Is it like he was licensed to learn?

10 Who doubts but thou dost this by aid of the Fiend?

Is it so? So it is, for thou smilest! Go, burn

To ashes, since such proves thy portion, unscreened

By bell, book and candle! Yet lately I weened

Balm yet was in Gilead, — some healing in store

For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou wast sunk

In a sudden despondency: not, as before, Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,

But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk!

FUST.

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite! — who, youthful and healthy,

20 Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,

Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born wealthy,

Nay, wise — how he wasted endowment designed

For the glory of God and the good of mankind!

That much were misused such occasions of grace

• Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.

But this should bid anger to pity give place —

He has turned from the wrong, in the right path to plod,

Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of God.

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the *Heureka* —

Soul saved!" was nigh bursting — unduly elate!

Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched — so to speak — a

Strange serpent, no cygnet? 'Tis this I debate

Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate!

FIRST FRIEND.

So abject, late lofty? Methinks I spy respite.

Make clean breast, discover what my teries hide

In thy room there!

SECOND FRIEND.

Ay, out with them! Do Satan despite!

Remember what caused his undoing was pride!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried!

SECOND FRIEND.

Exorcise!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, first — is there any remembers In substance that potent "*Ne pulvis*" — a psalm

Whereof some live spark haply lurks mid the embers

Which choke in my brain. Talk of "Gilead and balm"?

I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a qualm

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,

He broke forth in brimstone with curses, I'm strong

In — at least the commencement: the rest should go easy,

Friends helping. "*Ne pulvis et ignis*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

All wrong!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I've conned till I captured the whole.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Get along!

"*Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras, Nam fulmina*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Fiddlestick! Peace, dolts and dorr! Thus runs it "*Ne Numinis fulminas*" —

Then "*Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors Fulmen et grando et horrida mors.*"

SEVENTH FRIEND.

You blunder. "*Irati ne*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Mind your own business!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness
May well have surprised me. No Christian dares thief,
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These cleave:

10 "*Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes, Venimus*" — some such word — "*ad te, Domine.*
Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes
Cor . . . corda . . ." Plague take it!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

— "*erecta sint spe:*"

Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me!

SIXTH FRIEND.

A Canon's self wrote it me fair: I was tempted
To part with the sheepskin.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Didst grasp and let go
Such a godsend, thou Judas? My purse had been emptied
Ere part with the prize!

FUST.

Do I dream? Say ye so?
Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained my "*Pou sto*"!

20 I am saved: Archimedes, salute me!

OMNES.

Assistance!

Help, Angels! He summons . . .
Aroint thee! — by name,
His familiar!

FUST.

Approach!

OMNES.

Devil, keep thy due distance!

FUST.

Be tranquillised, townsmen! The knowledge ye claim
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame, —

Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,
The long-teeming brain's birth — applaud me, deride me, —
At last claims revealment. Wait!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Wait till appears
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there?

SECOND FRIEND.

Who fears?

Here's have at thee!

30

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Correctly now! "*Pulvis et cinis*" . . .

FUST.

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold
In my memory safe from *inilium* to *finis*.
Word for word, I produce you the whole,
plain enrolled,
Black letters, white paper — no scribe's red and gold!

OMNES.

Aroint thee!

FUST.

I go and return.
[*He enters the inner room.*]

FIRST FRIEND.

No doubt: but as boldly ^{Ay, 'tis "*ibis*"} "*redibis*" —
who'll say?
I rather conjecture "*in Orco peribis!*"

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Come, neighbours!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I'm with you! Show courage and stay
Hell's outbreak? Sirs, cowardice here wins the day!

FIFTH FRIEND.

What luck had that student of Bamberg 40
who ventured

To peep in the cell where a wizard of
note
Was busy in getting some black deed de-
bentured
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang
at his throat
A flame-breathing fury. Fust favours, I
note,

An ugly huge lurcher!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

If I placed reliance
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so
fast,
I'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

SIXTH FRIEND.

Appliance
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are
past.

OMNES.

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open
at last!

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind
him*).

10 As I promised, behold I perform! Appre-
hend you
The object I offer is poison or pest?
Receive without harm from the hand I ex-
tend you
A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!
Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try
them and test!

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who la-
mentedst
Thy five wits clean failed thee to render
aright

A poem read once and no more? — who
repentedst
Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from
sight
The characters none but our clerics indite?

20 Take and keep!

FIRST FRIEND.

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her!

SECOND FRIEND.

What imps deal so deftly, — five minutes
suffice
To play thus the penman?

THIRD FRIEND.

By Thomas the Doubter,
Five minutes, no more!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Out on arts that entice
Such scribes to do homage!

FIFTH FRIEND.

Stay! Once — and now twice —

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes
the inspection
Of line after line, the whole series, and
finds
Each letter join each — not a fault for de-
tection!

Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such
strokes of all kinds
In the criss-cross, all perfect!

SIXTH FRIEND.

There's nobody minds

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, 30
o'erscratches
A sheepskin more nimbly and surely
with ink,
Than Paul the Sub-Prior: here's paper
that matches
His parchment with letter on letter, no
link
Overleapt — underlost!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

No erasure, I think —

No blot, I am certain!

FUST.

Accept the new treasure!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I remembered full half!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

But who other than I
(Bear witness, bystanders!) when he broke
the measure
Repaired fault with "*fulmen*"?

FUST.

Put bickerings by!
Here's for thee — thee — and thee, too:
at need a supply [*distributing Proofs*].

For Mayence, though seventy times seven 40
should muster!

How now? All so feeble of faith that no
face
Which fronts me but whitens — or yellows,
were juster?
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits!

OMNES.

Grace — grace!
Call none of thy — helpmates! We'll
answer apace!

My paper — and mine — and mine also —
they vary

In nowise — agree in each tittle and jot!
Fust, how — why was this?

FUST.

Shall such "*Cur*" miss a "*quare*"?
Within, there! Throw doors wide!
Behold who complot
To abolish the scribe's work — blur,
blunder and blot!

*(The doors open, and the Press
is discovered in operation.)*

Prave full-bodied birth of this brain that
conceived thee

In splendour and music, — sustained the
slow drag

Of the days stretched to years dim with
doubt, — yet believed thee,

Had faith in thy first leap of life! Pulse
might flag —

— Mine fluttered how faintly! — Arch-
moment might lag

Its longest — I bided, made light of en-
durance,

Held hard by the hope of an advent
which — dreamed,

Is done now: night yields to the dawn's
reassurance:

I have thee — I hold thee — my fancy
that seemed,

My fact that proves palpable! Ay, Sirs,
I schemed

Completion that's fact: see this Engine —
be witness

Yourselves of its working! Nay, handle
my Types!

Each block bears a Letter: in order and
fitness

I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch!
See, it gripes

What's under! Let loose — draw! In
regular stripes

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem —
touched, tinted,

Turned out to perfection! The sheet,
late a blank,

Filled — ready for reading, — not written
but PRINTED!

Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I
thank,

Thee ever, Thee only! — Thy creature
that shrank

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst!
Creation

Revealed me no object, from insect to
Man,
But bore Thy hand's impress: earth ³⁰
glowed with salvation:

"Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust!
Continue my plan,
Who spake and earth was: with my word
things began.

"As sound so went forth, to the sight be
extended

Word's mission henceforward! The
task I assign,

Embrace — thy allegiance to evil is ended!
Have cheer, soul impregnate with pur-
pose! Combine

Soul and body, give birth to my concept —
called thine!

"Far and wide, North and South, East and
West, have dominion

O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word!
Traverse world

In sun-flash and sphere-song! Each ⁴⁰
beat of thy pinion

Bursts night, beckons day: once Truth's
banner unfurled,

Where's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to
nothingness hurled!"

More humbly — so, friends, did my fault
find redemption.

I sinned, soul-entailed by the tether of
sense:

My captor reigned master: I plead no
exemption

From Satan's award to his servant:
defence

From the fiery and final assault would be
— whence?

By making — as man might — to truth
restitution!

Truth is God: trample lies and lies'
father, God's foe!

Fix fact fast: truths change by an hour's ⁵⁰
revolution:

What deed's very doer, unaided, can
show

How 'twas done a year — month — week
— day — minute ago?

At best, he relates it — another reports it —
A third — nay, a thousandth records it:
and still

Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,
As down from truth's height it goes
sliding until

At the low level lie-mark it stops — whence
no skill

Of the scribe, intervening too tardily,
rescues

— Once fallen — lost fact from lie's
fate there. What scribe

— Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled
with desk-use,
Brains fretted by fancies — the volatile
tribe
That tease weary watchers — can boast
that no bribe

Shuts eye and frees hand and remits brain
from toiling?

Truth gailed — can we stay, at what-
ever the stage,
Truth a-slide, — save her snow from its
ultimate soiling
In mire, — by some process, stamp
promptly on page
Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make
truth heritage

Not merely of clerics, but poured out, full
measure,

10 On clowns — every mortal endowed
with a mind?

Read, gentle and simple! Let labour
win leisure

At last to bid truth do all duty as-
signed,
Not pause at the noble but pass to the
hind!

How bring to effect such swift sure simul-
taneous

Unlimited multiplication? How spread
By an arm-sweep a hand-throw — no
helping extraneous —

Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The
goldsmith," I said,
"Graves limning on gold: why not letters
on lead?"

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy par-
don

20 To me who played false, made a furtive
descent,

Found the sly secret workshop, — thy
genius kept guard on

Too slackly for once, — and surprised
thee low-bent

O'er thy labour — some chalice thy tool
would indent

With a certain free scroll-work framed
round by a border

Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so
fine,

No shading so shy but, in ordered dis-
order,

Each flourish came clear, — unbewil-
dered by shine,

On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each
line.

How judge if thy hand worked thy will?
By reviewing,

Revising again and again, piece by 3
piece,

Tool's performance, — this way, as I
watched. 'Twas through glueing
A paper-like film-stuff — thin, smooth,
void of crease,

On each cut of the graver: press hard! at
release,

No mark on the plate, but the paper
showed double:

His work might proceed: as he judged
— space or speck

Up he filled, forth he flung — was relieved
thus from trouble

Lest wrong — once — were right never
more: what could check

Advancement, completion? Thus lay at
my beck —

At my call — triumph likewise! "For,"
cried I, "what hinders

That graving turns Printing? Stamp 4
one word — not one

But fifty such, phoenix-like, spring from
death's cinders, —

Since death is word's doom, clerics hide
from the sun

As some churl closets up this rare chalice."
Go, run

Thy race now, Fust's child! High, O
Printing, and holy

Thy mission! These types, see, I chop
and I change

Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not
slowly

Yet surely lies fixed: last of all, I ar-
range

A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it!

FIRST FRIEND.

Strange!

SECOND FRIEND.

How simple exceedingly!

FUST.

Bustle, my Schaeffer!

Set type, — quick, Genesheim! Turn 50
screw now!

THIRD FRIEND.

Just that!

FOURTH FRIEND.

And no such vast miracle!

FUST.

"Plough with my heifer,

Ye find out my riddle," quoth Samson,
and pat

He speaks to the purpose. Grapes
squeezed in the vat

Yield to sight and to taste what is simple
— a liquid

Mere urchins may sip: but give time,
let ferment —

You've wine, manhood's master! Well,
"rectius si quid
Novistis im-per-ti-be!" Wait the event,
Then weigh the result! But whate'er
Thy intent,

O Thou, the one force in the whole varia-
tion

Of visible nature, — at work — do I
doubt? —

From Thy first to our last, in perpetual
creation —

A film hides us from Thee — 'twixt in-
side and out,

A film, on this earth where Thou bringest
about

New marvels, new forms of the glorious,
the gracious,

We bow to, we bless for: no star bursts
heaven's dome.

But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps
audacious

Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy
finger makes room

For one world's-want the more in Thy
Cosmos: presume

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the con-
ception

Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought,
word or deed?

I toiled, but Thy light on my dubious-
est step shone:

If I reach the glad goal, is it I who suc-
ceed

Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a
reed,

Or Thou? Knowledge only and abso-
lute, glory

As utter be Thine who concedest a
spark

Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transi-
tory

Existences! Nothing that lives, but
Thy mark

Gives law to — life's light: what is
doomed to the dark?

Where's ignorance? Answer, creation!
What height,

What depth has escaped Thy com-
mandment — to Know?

What birth in the ore-bed but answers
aright

Thy sting at its heart which impels —
bids "E'en so,

Not otherwise move or be motionless, —
grow,

"Decline, disappear!" Is the plant in
default

How to bud, when to branch forth?
The bird and the beast

— Do they doubt if their safety be found
in assault

Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms
the least

But follows light's guidance, — will fam-
ish, not feast?

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore
and plant,

All know, none is witless: around each,
a wall

Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,
Of Knowledge: beyond which one

hair's breadth, for all

Lies blank — not so much as a blackness 40
— a pall

Some sense unimagined must penetrate:
plain

Is only old licence to stand, walk or sit,
Move so far and so wide in the narrow

domain

Allotted each nature for life's use: past
it

How immensity spreads does he guess?
Not a whit.

Does he care? Just as little. Without?
No, within

Concerns him? he knows. Man Ig-
nores — thanks to Thee

Who madest him know, but — in know-
ing — begin

To know still new vastness of knowledge
must be

Outside him — to enter, to traverse, in fee 50

Have and hold! "Oh, Man's ignorance!"
hear the fool whine!

How were it, for better or worse, didst
thou grunt

Contented with sapience — the lot of the
swine

Who knows he was born for just trifles
to hunt? —

Monks' Paradise — "*Semper sint res uti
sunt!*"

No, Man's the prerogative — knowledge
once gained —

To ignore, — find new knowledge to
press for, to swerve

In pursuit of, no, not for a moment:
attained —

Why, onward through ignorance! Dare
and deserve!

As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve, 60

So approximates Man — Thee, who,
reachable not,

Hast formed him to yearningly follow
Thy whole
Sole and single omniscience!

Such, friends, is my lot:
I am back with the world: one more
step to the goal
Thanks for reaching I render — Fust's
help to Man's soul!

Mere mechanical help? So the hand
gives a toss
To the falcon, — aloft once, spread
pinions and fly,
Beat air far and wide, up and down and
across!

My Press strains a-tremble: whose
masterful eye
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to
descrie?

10 Give chase, soul! Be sure each new
capture consigned
To my Types will go forth to the world,
like God's bread
— Miraculous food not for body but mind,
Truth's manna! How say you? Put
case that, instead
Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed
These Heretics, Hussites . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

First answer my query!
If saved, art thou happy?

FUST.

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND.

Thy visage confirms it: how comes, then,
that — weary
And woe-begone late — was it show,
was it sham? —
We found thee sunk thiswise?

SECOND FRIEND.

— In need of the dram

20 From the flask which a provident neigh-
bour might carry!

FUST.

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon
flickers, fast fades!
I hailed Word's dispersion: could heart-
leaps but tarry!
Through me does Print furnish Truth
wings? The same aids
Cause Falsehood to range just as widely.
What raids

On a region undreamed of does Printing
enable
Truth's foe to effect! Printed leasing
and lies
May speed to the world's farthest corner —
gross fable
No less than pure fact — to impede, neu-
tralize,
Abolish God's gift and Man's gain!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost surmise

What struck me at first blush? Our 30
Beghards, Waldenses,
Jeronimites, Hussites — does one show
his head,
Spout heresy now? Not a priest in his
senses
Deigns answer mere speech, but piles
faggots instead,
Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all's
said.

Whereas if in future I pen an opusculé
Defying retort, as of old when rash
tongues
Were easy to tame, — straight some knave
of the Huss-School
Prints answer forsooth! Stop invisible
lungs?
The barrel of blasphemy broached once,
who bungs?

SECOND FRIEND.

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting 40
acceptance?
Each captious disputative boy has his
quirk
“*An cuique credendum sit?*” Well the
Church kept “*ans.*”
In order till Fust set his engine at
work!
What trash will come flying from Jew,
Moor and Turk

When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world
is abolished!
Goose — ominous name! With a goose
woe began:
Quoth Huss — which means “goose” in
his idiom unpolished —
“Ye burn now a Goose: there succeeds
me a Swan
Ye shall find quench your fire!”

FUST.

I foresee such a man.¹

¹ Martin Luther.

ASOLANDO :

FANCIES AND FACTS.

1889.

(Published on December 12, the day on which Mr. Browning died at Venice. A copy of the volume had, however, been received by him before his death.)

For an explanation of title, see the dedication to Mrs. Arthur Bronson.

TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON.

To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses — some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year, — adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?

I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: Asolare — “to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random.” The objection that such a word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important — Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither — where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Cà Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!

Gratefully and affectionately yours,
R. B.

ASOLO: October 15, 1889.

PROLOGUE.

“THE Poet’s age is sad: for why?

In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye

At once involved with alien glow —
His own soul’s iris-bow.

“And now a flower is just a flower:

Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird,
man —

Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
Of dyes which, when life’s day began,
Round each in glory ran.”

14

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
Which were your choice? A lens to
drape

In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
Each object — or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing? — so clear
That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
Through outer seeming — truth ablaze,
Not falsehood’s fancy-haze?

20

How many a year, my Asolo,
Since — one step just from sea to land —
I found you, loved yet feared you so —
For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No —

No mastery of mine o’er these!
Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
Drop eyes to earthward! Language?
Tush!

Silence ’tis awe decrees.

34

And now? The lambent flame is —
where?

Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,
Hill, vale, tree, flower, — Italia’s rare
O’er-running beauty crowds the eye —
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower — they stand distinct,
Nature to know and name. What then?

A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
Fancy from fact: see, all’s in ken:

Has once my eyelid winked?

46

No, for the purged ear apprehends
 Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
 The Voice said "Call my works thy
 friends!
 At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
 God is it who transcends."

ASOLO: Sept. 6, 1889.

ROSNY.

[Rosny is the name of the *château* where the celebrated Duke of Sully (1560-1641) was born. It lies half-way between Mantes and Bonnières. Henri Quatre slept at the *château* after Ivry.]

WOE, he went galloping into the war,
 Clara, Clara!

Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a
 scar?

Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace
 10 Making for manhood which nowise we
 mar:

See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face—
 Rosny, Rosny!

Light does he laugh: "With your love in
 my soul" —

(Clara, Clara!)

"How could I other than — sound, safe
 and whole —

Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet
 stand

Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's
 goal,

Who won the race kneels, craves reward
 at your hand —

Rosny, Rosny?"

20 Ay, but if certain who envied should see!

Clara, Clara,

Certain who simper: "The hero for me
 Hardly of life were so chary as miss

Death — death and fame — that's love's
 guerdon when She

Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice
 fell on this

Rosny, Rosny!"

So, — go on dreaming, — he lies mid a
 heap

(Clara, Clara,)

Of the slain by his hand: what is death
 but a sleep?

30 Dead, with my portrait displayed on his
 breast:

Love wrought his undoing: "No prudence
 could keep

The love-maddened wretch from his
 fate." That is best,

Rosny, Rosny!

DUBIETY.

I WILL be happy if but for once:
 Only help me, Autumn weather,
 Me and my cares to screen, ensconce
 In luxury's sofa-lap of leather!

Sleep? Nay, comfort — with just a cloud
 Suffusing day too clear and bright:
 Eve's essence, the single drop allowed
 To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud, — adjust,
 Dim and not deaden, — somehow
 sheathe
 Aught sharp in the rough world's busy
 thrust,
 If it reach me through dreaming's
 vapour-wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same!
 For, what has disarmed the world?
 Outside,
 Quiet and peace: inside, nor blame
 Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

What is it like that has happened before? 5
 A dream? No dream, more real by
 much.

A vision? But fanciful days of yore
 Brought many: mere musing seems not
 such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all!
 — Of what came once when a woman
 leant

To feel for my brow where her kiss might
 fall.

Truth ever, truth only the excellent!

NOW.

OUT of your whole life give but a moment!
 All of your life that has gone before,
 All to come after it, — so you ignore, 6
 So you make perfect the present, — condense,

In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,

Thought and feeling and soul and sense —
 Merged in a moment which gives me at
 last

You around me for once, you beneath me,
 above me —

Me — sure that despite of time future,
 time past, —

This tick of our life-time's one moment
 you love me!

How long such suspension may linger?
 Ah, Sweet —

The moment eternal — just that and no more —
 When ecstasy's utmost we clutch at the core
 While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shut
 and lips meet!

HUMILITY.

WHAT girl but, having gathered flowers,
 Stript the beds and spoilt the bowers,
 From the lapful light she carries
 Drops a careless bud? — nor tarries
 To regain the waif and stray:
 "Store enough for home" — she'll say.

So say I too: give your lover
 Heaps of loving — under, over,
 Whelm him — make the one the wealthy!
 Am I all so poor who — stealthy
 Work it was! — picked up what fell:
 Not the worst bud — who can tell?

POETICS.

"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish, so,
 Love?

"Flower she is, my rose" — or else
 "My very swan is she" —

Or perhaps "Yon maid-moon, blessing
 earth below, Love,
 That art thou!" — to them, belike: no
 such vain words from me.

"Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath,"
 I chide it:

"Bend thy neck its best, swan, — hers
 the whiter curve!"

Be the moon the moon: my Love I place
 beside it:

What is she? Her human self, — no
 lower word will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM.

ALL the breath and the bloom of the year
 in the bag of one bee:

All the wonder and wealth of the mine in
 the heart of one gem:

In the core of one pearl all the shade and
 the shine of the sea:

Breath and bloom, shade and shine, —
 wonder, wealth, and — how far above
 them —

Truth, that's brighter than gem,

Trust, that's purer than pearl, —

Brightest truth, purest trust in the uni-
 verse — all were for me

In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL.

A SIMPLE ring with a single stone
 To the vulgar eye no stone of price:
 Whisper the right word, that alone —
 Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
 And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern
 scroll)
 Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
 Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('tis I this time that say)
 With little the world counts worthy 40
 praise
 Utter the true word — out and away
 Escapes her soul: I am wrapt in blaze,
 Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
 Lord whole and sole — by a minute's
 birth —
 Through the love in a girl!

SPECULATIVE.

OTHERS may need new life in Heaven —
 Man, Nature, Art — made new, assume!
 Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
 Nature — new light to clear old gloom,
 Art that breaks bounds, gets scaring-room. 50

I shall pray: "Fugitive as precious —
 Minutes which passed, — return, re-
 main!

Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
 You with old pleasure, me — old pain,
 So we but meet nor part again!"

WHITE WITCHCRAFT.

[White witchcraft was helpful and not
 harmful magic.]

If you and I could change to beasts, what
 beast should either be?

Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn
 fox then, I decree!

Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now
 do your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend —
 turned loathsome? What, a toad?
 So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear 60
 men, pursue your road!
 Leave but my crevice in the stone, a rep-
 tile's fit abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia!¹ "He's
 loathsome, I allow:

There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath
 his puckered brow:

But see his eyes that follow mine — love
 lasts there anyhow."

¹ Neapolitan sorceress. See Horace.

BAD DREAMS. I.

LAST night I saw you in my sleep:
 And how your charm of face was
 changed!
 I asked "Some love, some faith you keep?"
 You answered "Faith gone, love es-
 tranged."

Whereat I woke — a twofold bliss:
 Waking was one, but next there came
 This other: "Though I felt, for this,
 My heart break, I loved on the same."

BAD DREAMS. II.

10 You in the flesh and here —
 Your very self! Now, wait!
 One word! May I hope or fear?
 Must I speak in love or hate?
 Stay while I ruminate!

The fact and each circumstance
 Dare you disown? Not you!
 That vast dome, that huge dance,
 And the gloom which overgrew
 A — possibly festive crew!

20 For why should men dance at all —
 Why women — a crowd of both —
 Unless they are gay? Strange ball —
 Hands and feet plighting troth,
 Yet partners enforced and loth!

Of who danced there, no shape
 Did I recognise: thwart, perverse,
 Each grasped each, past escape
 In a whirl or weary or worse:
 Man's sneer met woman's curse,

30 While he and she toiled as if
 Their guardian set galley-slaves
 To supple chained limbs grown stiff:
 Unmanacled trulls and knaves —
 The lash for who misbehaves!

And a gloom was, all the while,
 Deeper and deeper yet
 O'ergrowing the rank and file
 Of that army of haters — set
 To mimic love's fever-fret.

40 By the wall-side close I crept,
 Avoiding the livid maze,
 And, safely so far, outstepped
 On a chamber — a chapel, says
 My memory or betrays —

Closet-like, kept aloof
 From unseemly witnessing
 What sport made floor and roof
 Of the Devil's palace ring
 While his Damned amused their king.

Ay, for a low lamp burned,
 And a silence lay about
 What I, in the midst, discerned
 Though dimly till, past doubt,
 'Twas a sort of throne stood out —

High seat with steps, at least:
 And the topmost step was filled
 By — whom? What vested priest
 A stranger to me, — his guild,
 His cult, unreconciled

To my knowledge how guild and cult
 Are clothed in this world of ours:
 I pondered, but no result
 Came to — unless that Giaours
 So worship the Lower Powers.

When suddenly who entered?
 Who knelt — did you guess I saw?
 Who — raising that face where centre
 Allegiance to love and law
 So lately — off-casting awe,

Down-treading reserve, away
 Thrusting respect . . . but mine
 Stands firm — firm still shall stay!
 Ask Satan! for I decline
 To tell — what I saw, in fine!

Yet here in the flesh you come —
 Your same self, form and face, —
 In the eyes, mirth still at home!
 On the lips, that commonplace
 Perfection of honest grace!

Yet your errand is — needs must be
 To palliate — well, explain,
 Expurgate in some degree
 Your soul of its ugly stain.
 Oh, you — the good in grain —

How was it your white took tinge?
 "A mere dream" — never object!
 Sleep leaves a door on hinge
 Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect
 Is off and away: detect

Her vagaries when loose, who can!
 Be she pranksome, be she rude,
 Disguise with the day began:
 With the night — ah, what ensued
 From draughts of a drink hell-brewed

Then She: "What a queer wild drea—
 And perhaps the best fun is —
 Myself had its fellow — I seem
 Scarce awake from yet. 'Twas this
 Shall I tell you? First, a kiss!

"For the fault was just your own, —
 'Tis myself expect apology:
 You warned me to let alone
 (Since our studies were mere philology
 That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

"So, I dreamed that I passed *exam*
Till a question posed me sore:
'Who translated this epigram
By — an author we best ignore?'
And I answered 'Hannah More'!"

BAD DREAMS. III.

THAT was my dream: I saw a Forest
Old as the earth, no track nor trace
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explor-
est —

Though in a trembling rapture — space
Immeasurable! Shrubs, turned trees,
Trees that touch heaven, support its frieze
Studded with sun and moon and star:
While — oh, the enormous growths that
bar

Mine eye from penetrating past
Their tangled twine where lurks — nay,
lives

Royally lone, some brute-type cast
I the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

On, Soul! I saw a lucid City
Of architectural device
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,
Lightning! nor leave a cicatrice
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,
Structures palatial, — streets which mire
Dares not defile, paved all too fine
For human footstep's smirch, not thine —
Proud solitary traverser,
My Soul, of silent lengths of way —
With what ecstatic dread, aver,
Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay!

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous!
A City, yes, — a Forest, true, —
But each devouring each. Perfidious
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew
Was a pavilion once: each oak
Held on his horns some spoil he broke
By surreptitiously beneath
Upthrusting: pavements, as with teeth,
Gripped huge weed widening crack and
split
In squares and circles stone-work erst.
Oh, Nature — good! Oh, Art — no whit
Less worthy! Both in one — accurst!

BAD DREAMS. IV.

It happened thus: my slab, though new,
Was getting weather-stained, — beside,
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew
Letter and letter: till you cried
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came:
— Was he my lover? Call him, pray,
My life's cold critic bent on blame

Of all poor I could do or say
To make me worth his love one day — 50

One far day when, by diligent
And dutiful amending faults,
Foibles, all weaknesses which went
To challenge and excuse assaults
Of culture wronged by taste that halts —

Discrepancies should mar no plan
Symmetric of the qualities
Claiming respect from — say — a man
That's strong and stern. "Once more 60
he prires
Into me with those critic eyes!"

No question! — so — "Conclude, con-
demn
Each failure my poor self avows!
Leave to its fate all you condemn!
There's Solomon's selected spouse:
Earth needs must hold such maids —
choose them!"

Why, he was weeping! Surely gone
Sternness and strength: with eyes to
ground

And voice a broken monotone —
"Only be as you were! Abound 70
In foibles, faults, — laugh, robed and
crowned

"As Folly's veriest queen, — care I
One feather-fluff? Look pity, Love,
On prostrate me — your foot shall try
This forehead's use — mount thence
above,
And reach what Heaven you dignify!"

Now, what could bring such change about?
The thought perplexed: till, following
His gaze upon the ground, — why, out
Came all the secret! So, a thing 80
Thus simple has deposed my king!

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil
Plain reading on the lettered slab,
My name was clear enough — no soil
Effaced the date when one chance stab
Of scorn . . . if only ghosts might blab!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS.

WE two stood simply friend-like side by
side,
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,
Till she at length broke silence. "How it
towers
Yonder, the ruin¹ o'er this vale of ours! 90

¹ Of the palace of Queen Cornaro, who,
exiled from Cyprus, lived at Asolo, with Cardinal
Bembo acting as Secretary.

The West's faint flare behind it so relieves
Its rugged outline — sight perhaps de-
ceives,

Or I could almost fancy that I see
A branch wave plain — belike some wind-
sown tree

Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.
What would I give for the perspective glass
At home, to make out if 'tis really so!

Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo

That certain weed-growths on the ravaged
wall

to Seem" . . . something that I could not
say at all,

My thought being rather — as absorbed
she sent

Look onward after look from eyes distent
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left
ajar —

"Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that
are!

What of a wilding? By you stands, and
may

So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,
One who, if once aware that your regard
Claimed what his heart holds, — woke, as
from its sward

The flower, the dormant passion, so to
speak —

to Then what a rush of life would startling
wreak

Revenge on your inapprehensive stare
While, from the ruin and the West's faint
flare,

You let your eyes meet mine, touch what
you term

Quietude — that's an universe in germ —
The dormant passion needing but a look
To burst into immense life!"

"No, the book
Which noticed how the wall-growths
wave" said she

"Was not by Ruskin."

I said "Vernon Lee?"

WHICH?

30 So, the three Court-ladies began
Their trial of who judged best

In esteeming the love of a man:

Who preferred with most reason was
thereby confessed

Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and cager;
An Abbé crossed legs to decide on the
wager.

First the Duchesse: "Mine for
me —

Who were it but God's for Him,
And the King's for — who but he?

* The authoress of *Euphorion* and other
books (Miss Violet Paget).

Both faithful and loyal, one grace more
shall brim

His cup with perfection: a lady's true
lover,

He holds — save his God and his king —
none above her."

"I require" — outspoke the Mar-
quise —

"Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine
deeds:

Play the paladin must he, to please

My whim, and — to prove my knight's
service exceeds

Your saint's and your loyalist's praying
and kneeling —

Show wounds, each wide mouth to my
mercy appealing."

Then the Comtesse: "My choice be
a wretch,

Merc losel in body and soul,

Thrice accurst! What care I, so
he stretch

Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ulti-
mate goal,

Out of earth and men's noise — names of
'infidel,' 'traitor,'

Cast up at him? Crown me, crown's ad-
judicator!"

And the Abbé uncrossed his legs,

Took snuff, a reflective pinch,

Broke silence: "The question begs

Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall
I flinch?

The love which to one and one only has
reference

Seems terribly like what perhaps gains
God's preference."

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG.

CRESCENZIO, the Pope's Legate at the High
Council, Trent,

— Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two,
March Twenty-five — intent

On writing letters to the Pope till late into
the night,

Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a
monstrous sight:

(I give mine Author's very words: he
penned, I reindite.)

A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming,
ears that hung

Down to the very ground almost, into the
chamber sprung

And made directly for him, and laid him-
self right under

The table where Crescenzo wrote — who
called in fear and wonder

His servants in the ante-room, commanded everyone

To look for and find out the beast: but, looking, they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after died:

And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried

Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his bed-side.

Heaven keep us Protestants from harm: the rest . . . no ill betide!

THE POPE AND THE NET.

WHAT, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,

Made Pope at our last Conclave? Full low his life began:

His father earned the daily bread as just a fisherman.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof of mother-wit,

Becomes first Deacon, and then Priest, then Bishop: see him sit

No less than Cardinal ere long, while no one cries "Unfit!"

But someone smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow and nods head:

Each winks at each: "P-faith, a rise! Saint Peter's net, instead

Of sword and keys, is come in vogue!" You think he blushes red?

Not he, 'of humble holy heart! "Unworthy me!" he sighs:

"From fisher's drudge to Church's prince — it is indeed a rise:

So, here's my way to keep the fact for ever in my eyes!"

And straightway in his palace-hall, where commonly is set

Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo, we met

His mean estate's reminder in his fisher-father's net!

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in a trice:

"The humble holy heart that holds of new-born pride no spice!

He's just the saint to choose for Pope!" Each adds "'Tis my advice."

So, Pope he was: and when we flocked — its sacred slipper on —

To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing was gone —

That guarantee of lowlihead, — eclipsed that star which shone!

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I cried "Pish!

I'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the common wish.

Why, Father, is the net removed?" "Son, 30 it hath caught the fish."

THE BEAN-FEAST.

HE was the man — Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's son:

He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God when 'twas done:

But of all he had to thank for, my fancy somehow leans

To thinking, what most moved him was a certain meal on beans.

For one day, as his wont was, in just enough disguise

As he went exploring wickedness, — to see with his own eyes

If law had due observance in the city's entrail dark

As well as where, if the open, crime stood an obvious mark, —

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down once house

Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the 40 ruinous:

And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured bold,

To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil, and cold.

There sat they at high-supper — man and wife, lad and lass,

Poor as you please but cleanly all and care-free: pain that was

— Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its time, —

Mightily munched the brave ones — what mattered gloom or grime?

Said Sixtus "Feast, my children! who works hard needs eat well.

I'm just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.

Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries his best,

But, since he's only mortal, sends such as I 50 to test

The truth of all that's told him — how folk like you may fare:

Come! — only don't stop eating — when mouth has words to spare —

"You" — smiled he — "play the spokesman, bell-wether of the flock!

Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances unlock!

How of your work and wages? — pleasures,
if such may be —
Pains, as such are for certain." Thus
smiling questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole
upon the group —
An inexpressible surmise: why should a
priest thus stoop —
Pry into what concerned folk? Each
visage fell. Aware,
Cries S' t'is interposing: "Nay, children,
have no care!

'Fear nothing! Who employs me re-
quires the plain truth. Pelf
Beguiles who should inform me: so, I in-
form myself.

See!" And he threw his hood back, let
the close vesture ope,
10 Showed face, and where on tippet the cross
lay: 'twas the Pope.

Imagine the joyful wonder! "How shall
the like of us —

Poor souls — requite such blessing of our
rude bean-feast?" "Thus —
Thus amply!" laughed Pope Sixtus. "I
early rise, sleep late:

Who works may eat: they tempt me, your
beans there: spare a plate!"

Down sat he on the door-step: 'twas they
this time said grace:

He ate up the last mouthful, wiped lips,
and then, with face

Turned heavenward, broke forth thank-
ful: "Not now, that earth obeys

Thy word in mine, that through me the
peoples know Thy ways —

But that Thy care extendeth to Nature's
homely wants,

10 And, while man's mind is strengthened,
Thy goodness nowise scants

Man's body of its comfort, — that I whom
kings and queens

Crouch to, pick crumbs from off my table,
relish beans!

The thunders I but seem to launch, there
plain Thy hand all see:

That I have appetite, digest, and thrive —
that boon's for me."

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord: "So,
red-handed I catch thee?

Death-doomed by our Law of the Bor-
der!

We've a gallows outside and a chiel to dis-
patch thee:

Who trespasses — hangs: all's in order."

He met frown with smile, did the young
English gallant:

Then the Laird's dame: "Nay, Hus-
band, I beg!

He's comely: be merciful! Grace for the
callant

— If he marries our Muckle-mouth
Meg!"

"No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours
do I marry:

Grant rather the gallows!" laughed he.

"Foul fare kith and kin of you — why do
you tarry?"

"To tame your fierce temper!" quoth
she.

"Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him
fast for a week:

Cold, darkness and hunger work won-
ders:

Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will
squeak,

And 'it rains' soon succeed to 'it thun-
ders."

A week did he bide in the cold and the
dark

— Not hunger: for duly at morning

In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark

Chirped "Muckle-mouth Meg still ye're
scorning?

"Go hang, but here's parritch to hearten ye
first!"

"Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within
some

Such music as yours, mine should match
it or burst:

No frog-jaws! So tell folk, my Win-
some!"

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's
door set wide,

Out he marched, and there waited the
lassie:

"Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for
a bride!

Consider! Sky's blue and turf's grassy:

"Life's sweet: shall I say ye wed Muckle-
mouth Meg?"

"Not I," quoth the stout heart: "too
eerie

The mouth that can swallow a bubbly-
jock's¹ egg:

Shall I let it munch mine? Never,
Dearie!"

"Not Muckle-mouth Meg? Wow, the
obstinate man!

Perhaps he would rather wed me!"

* A turkey.

"Ay, would he — with just for a dowry
your can!"

"I'm Muckle-mouth Meg" chirruped
she.

"Then so — so — so — so —" as he kissed
her apace —

"Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's
grace,

To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest!"

ARCADES AMBO.

A. You blame me that I ran away?

Why, Sir, the enemy advanced:

Balls flew about, and — who can say

But one, if I stood firm, had glanced

In my direction? Cowardice?

I only know we don't live twice,

Therefore — shun death, is my ad-
vice.

B. Shun death at all risk? Well, at
some!

True, I myself, Sir, though I scold

The cowardly, by no means come

Under reproof as overbold

— I, who would have no end of brutes

Cut up alive to guess what suits

My case and saves my toe from shoots.

THE LADY AND THE PAINTER.

She. Yet womanhood you reverence,
So you profess!

He. With heart and soul.

She. Of which fact this is evidence!

To help Art-study, — for some dole

Of certain wretched shillings, — you

Induce a woman — virgin too —

To strip and stand stark-naked?

He. True.

She. Nor feel you so degrade her?

He. What

— (Excuse the interruption) — clings

Half-savage-like around your hat?

She. Ah, do they please you? Wild-
bird-wings

Next season, — Paris-prints assert, —

We must go feathered to the skirt:

My modiste keeps on the alert.

Owls, hawks, jays — swallows most
approve . . .

He. Dare I speak plainly?

She. Oh, I trust!

He. Then, Lady Blanche, it less would
move

In heart and soul of me disgust

Did you strip off those spoils you
wear,

And stand — for thanks. not shil- 44
lings — bare,

To help Art like my Model there.

She well knew what absolved her —
praise

In me for God's surpassing good,

Who granted to my reverent gaze

A type of purest womanhood.

You — clothed with murder of His
best

Of harmless beings — stand the test!

What is it you know?

She. That you jest

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE.

[This story is amongst the many stories
told in the honour of the Virgin Mary by
St. Alphonsus Liguori in "The Glories of
Mary."]

STOP rowing! This one of our bye-canals
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross 50
That's named "Of the Angel": listen
why!

The name "Of the Devil" too much appals
Venetian acquaintance, so — his the loss,
While the gain goes . . . look on high!

An angel visibly guards yon house:

Above each scutcheon — a pair — stands
he,

Enfolds them with droop of either wing:

The family's fortune were perilous

Did he thence depart — you will soon agree,

If I hitch into verse the thing. 60

For, once on a time, this house belonged
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spar,
But also with overmuch lust of gain:

In the matter of law you were nowise
wronged,

But alas for the lucre! He picked you
bare

To the bone. Did folk complain?

"I exact" growled he "work's rightful due:

'Tis folk seek me, not I seek them.

Advice at its price! They succeed or fail,

Get law in each case — and a lesson too: 70

Keep clear of the Courts — is advice ad-
rem:

They'll remember, I'll be bail!"

So, he pocketed fee without a qualm.

What reason for squeamishness? La-
bour done,

To play he betook him with lightened
heart,

Ate, drank and made merry with song or
psalm,

Since the yoke of the Church is an easy
one —
Fits neck nor causes smart.

Brief: never was such an extortionate
Rascal — the word has escaped my teeth
And yet — (all's down in a book no ass
Indited, believe me!) — this reprobate
Was punctual at prayer-time: gold lurked
beneath

"Alloy of the rankest brass.

For, play the extortioner as he might,
10 Fleece folk each day and all day long,
There was this redeeming circumstance:
He never lay down to sleep at night
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet
strong,
"Our Lady avert mischance!"

Now it happened at close of a fructuous
week,

"I must ask" quoth he "some Saint to
dine:

I want that widow well out of my ears
With her ailing and wailing. Who bade
her seek

Redress at my hands? 'She was wronged!'
Folk whine

30 If to Law wrong right appears.

"Matteo da Bascio — he's my man!
No less than Chief of the Capucins:
His presence will surely suffumigate
My house — fools think lies under a ban
If somebody loses what somebody wins.
Hark, there he knocks at the grate!

"Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church!
I go and prepare — to bid, that is,
My trusty and diligent servitor

30 Get all things in readiness. Vain the
search

Through Venice for one to compare with
this

My model of ministrants: for —

"For — once again, nay, three times over,
My helpmate's an ape! so intelligent,
I train him to drudge at household work:
He toils and he moils, I live in clover:
Oh, you shall see! There's a goodly
scent —

From his cooking, or I'm a Turk!

"Scarce need to descend and supervise:

40 I'll do it, however: wait here awhile!"
So, down to the kitchen gaily scuttles
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise
Of the holy man. "O depth of guile!
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

"While — who is it dresses the food and
pours

The liquor? Some fiend — I make no
doubt —

In likeness of — which of the loathly
brutes?

An ape! Where hides he? No bull that
gores,

No bear that hugs — 'tis the mock and flout
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

"So — out with thee, creature, wherever
thou hidest!

I charge thee, by virtue of . . . right do I
judge!

There skulks he perdue, crouching under
the bed.

Well done! What, forsooth, in beast's
shape thou confidest?

I know and would name thee but that I
begrudge

Breath spent on such carrion. Instead —

"I adjure thee by — " "Stay!"
laughed the portent that rose

From floor up to ceiling: "No need to ad-
jure!

See Satan in person, late ape by command
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint's

nose
Scents brimstone though incense be burned
for a lure.

Yet, hence! for I'm safe, understand!

"'Tis my charge to convey to fit punish-
ment's place

This lawyer, my liegeman, for cruelty
wrought

On his clients, the widow and orphan, poor
souls

He has plagued by exactions which proved
law's disgrace,

Made equity void and to nothingness
brought

God's pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals!"

"Stay!" nowise confounded, withstands
Hell its match:

"How comes it, were truth in this story of
thine,

God's punishment suffered a minute's de-
lay?

Weeks, months have elapsed since thou
squattedst at watch

For a spring on thy victim: what caused
thee decline

Advantage till challenged to-day?"

"That challenge I meet with contempt,"
quoth the fiend.

"Thus much I acknowledge: the man's
armed in mail:

I wait till a joint's loose, then quick ply my
claws.

Thy friend's one good custom — he knows
not — has screened

- His flesh hitherto from what else would
assail:
At "Save me, Madonna!" I pause.
- "That prayer had the losel but once pre-
termit,
My pounce were upon him. I keep me
attent:
He's in safety but till he's caught napping.
Enough!"
"Ay, enough!" smiles the saint — "for
the biter is bit,
The spy caught in somnolence. Vanish!
I'm sent
To smooch up what fiends do in rough."
- "I vanish? Through wall or through
roof?" the ripost
Grinned gaily. "My orders were —
'Leave not unharmed
The abode of this lawyer! Do damage to
prove
'Twas for something thou quittedst the
land of the lost —
To add to their number this unit!' Though
charmed
From descent there, on earth that's above
"I may haply amerce him." "So do, and
begone,
I command thee! For, look! Though
there's doorway behind
And window before thee, go straight
through the wall,
Leave a breach in the brickwork, a gap in
the stone
For who passes to stare at!" "Spare
speech! I'm resigned:
Here goes!" roared the goblin, as all—
- Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail
out a-stream,
Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he
soared
Or else sank, was clean gone through the
hole anyhow.
The Saint returned thanks: then a satis-
fied gleam
On the bald polished pate showed that
triumph was scored.
"To dinner with appetite now!"
- Down he trips. "In good time!" smirks
the host. "Didst thou scent
Rich savour of roast meat? Where hides
he, my ape?
Look alive, be alert! He's away to wash
plates.
Sit down, Saint! What's here? Dost
examine a rent
In the napkin thou twistest and twirlest?
Agape . . .
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates
- "From thy wringing a cloth, late was
lavendered fair?
What means such a marvel?" "Just this
does it mean:
I convince and convict thee of sin!" an-
swers straight
The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever —
O rare! —
Blood — blood from a napery snow not
more clean.
"A miracle shows thee thy state!
- "See — blood thy extortions have wrung
from the flesh
Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be 44
shorn
And left thee — or fleeced to the quick or
so flayed
That, behold, their blood gurgles and
grumbles afresh
To accuse thee! Ay, down on thy knees,
get up sworn
To restore! Restitution once made,
- "Sin no more! Dost thou promise? Ab-
solved, then, arise!
Upstairs follow me! Art amazed at yon
breach?
Who battered and shattered and scattered,
escape
From thy purlieus obtaining? That
Father of Lies
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all
and each
The Devil's disguised as thine ape!" 50
- Be sure that our lawyer was torn by re-
morse,
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so
to alter
His ways that how else could our Saint but
declare
He was cleansed of past sin? "For sin
future — fare worse
Thou undoubtedly wilt," warned the Saint,
"shouldst thou falter
One whit!" "Oh, for that have no care!
- "I am firm in my purposed amendment.
But, prithee,
Must ever affront and affright me yon
gap?
Who made it for exit may find it of use
For entrance as easy. If, down in his 60
smithy
He forges me fetters — when heated, may-
hap,
He'll up with an armful! Broke loose —
- "How bar him out henceforth?" "Judi-
ciously urged!"
Was the good man's reply. "How to
baulk him is plain.

There's nothing the Devil objects to so
 much,
 So speedily flies from, as one of those
 purged
 Of his presence, the angels who erst
 formed his train —
 His, their emperor. Choose one of such!
 "Get fashioned his likeness and set him
 on high
 At back of the breach thus adroitly filled
 up:
 Display him as guard of two scutcheons,
 thy arms:
 I warrant no devil attempts to get by
 And disturb thee so guarded. Eat,
 drink, dine and sup
 10 In thy rectitude, safe from alarms!"

So said and so done. See, the angel has
 place
 Where the Devil had passage! All's
 down in a book.
 Gainsay me? Consult it! Still faith-
 less? Trust *me*?
 Trust Father Boverio who gave me the
 case
 In his Annals — gets of it, by hook or by
 crook,
 Two confirmative witnesses: three

Are surely enough to establish an act:
 And thereby we learn — would we ascer-
 tain truth —

To trust wise tradition which took, at the
 time,

20 Note that served till slow history ventured
 on fact,
 Though folk have their fling at tradition
 forsooth!

Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime!

BEATRICE SIGNORINI.

[Beatrice was a Roman lady married to
 the painter Romanelli, who after his mar-
 riage fell in love with a famous lady painter,
 Artemisia Gentileschi, a pupil of Guido's.
 Baldinucci tells the story Browning re-
 peats.]

THIS strange thing happened to a painter
 once:

Viterbo boasts the man among her sons
 Of note, I seem to think: his ready tool
 Picked up its precepts in Cortona's
 school —

That's Pietro Berretini, whom they call
 Cortona, these Italians: greatish-small,
 Our painter was his pupil, by repute

30 His match if not his master absolute,
 Though whether he spoiled fresco more or
 less,

And what's its fortune, scarce repays your
 guess.

Still, for one circumstance, I save his
 name

— Francesco Romanelli: do the same!

He went to Rome and painted: there he
 knew

A wonder of a woman painting too —

For she, at least, was no Cortona's
 drudge:

Witness that ardent fancy-shape — I
 judge

A semblance of her soul — she called
 "Desire"

With starry front for guide, where sits the
 fire

She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.

If you see Florence, pay that piece your
 vows,

Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind,
 imbued

With monkish morals, bade folk "Drape
 the nude

And stop the scandal!" quoth the record
 prim

I borrow this of: hang his book and him!
 At Rome, then, where these fated ones met
 first,

The blossom of his life had hardly burst
 While hers was blooming at full beauty's
 stand:

No less Francesco — when half-ripe he
 scanned

Consummate Artemisia — grew one want
 To have her his and make her ministrant

With every gift of body and of soul
 To him. In vain. Her sphery self was
 whole —

Might only touch his orb at Art's sole
 point.

Suppose he could persuade her to enjoin
 Her life — past, present, future — all in
 his

At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss
 Of love through lips, would love's success
 defeat

Artistry's haunting curse — the Incom-
 plete?

Artists no doubt they both were, — what
 beside

Was she? who, long had felt heart, soul
 spread wide

Her life out, knowing much and loving
 well,

On either side Art's narrow space where
 fell

Reflection from his own speck: but the
 germ

Of individual genius — what we term
 The very self, the God-gift whence had
 grown

Heart's life and soul's life, — how make
 that his own?

Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small

On Art's one facet of her ampler ball;
 The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back
 heaven, earth,
 All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh
 ere birth
 Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.
 "What though in Art I stand the abler-
 skilled,"
 (So he conceited: mediocrity
 Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)
 "If only Art were suing, mine would plead
 To purpose: man — by nature I exceed
 Woman the bounded: but how much be-
 side
 She boasts, would sue in turn and be
 denied!
 Love her? My own wife loves me in a
 sort
 That suits us both: she takes the world's
 report
 Of what my work is worth, and, for the
 rest,
 Concedes that, while his consort keeps her
 nest,
 The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives
 A wide free life which she at least for-
 gives —
 Good Beatrice Signorini! Well
 And wisely did I choose her. But the
 spell
 To subjugate this Artemisia — where?
 She passionless? — she resolute to care
 Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency
 Of fact that she is she and I am I
 — Acknowledged arbitrator for us both
 In her life as in mine which she were
 loth
 Even to learn the laws of? No, and no
 Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:
 I for myself, alas!"

Whereon, instead

Of the checked lover's utterance — why,
 he said
 — Leaning above her easel: "Flesh is
 red"
 (Or some such just remark) — "by no
 means white
 As Guido's practice teaches: you are
 right."
 Then came the better impulse: "What if
 pride
 Were wisely trampled on, whate'er be-
 tide?
 If I grow hers, not mine — join lives, con-
 fuse
 Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose
 Myself to Artemisia? That were love!
 Of two souls — one must bend, one rule
 above:
 If I crouch under proudly, lord turned
 slave,
 Were it not worthier both than if she
 gave
 Herself — in treason to herself — to me?"

And, all the while, he felt it could not be.
 Such love were true love: love that way
 who can!
 Someone that's born half woman not whole
 man:
 For man, prescribed man better or man
 worse,
 Why, whether microcosm or universe,
 What law prevails alike through great and
 small,
 The world and man — world's miniature:
 we call?
 Male is the master. "That way" —
 smiled and sighed
 Our true male estimator — "puts her pride 50
 My wife in making me the outlet whence
 She learns all Heaven allows: 'tis my
 pretence
 To paint: her lord should do what else
 but paint?
 Do I break brushes, cloister me turned
 saint?
 Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse
 Who acts for Heaven, allows and dis-
 allows
 At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the
 wrong
 In all things. That's my wife's way.
 But this strong
 Confident Artemisia — an adept
 In Art does she conceit herself? 'Except 6
 In just this instance,' tell her, 'no one
 draws
 More rigidly observant of the laws
 Of right design: yet here, — permit me
 hint, —
 If the acromion had a deeper dint,
 That shoulder were perfection.' What
 surprise
 — Nay scorn, shoots black fire from
 those startled eyes!
 She to be lessoned in design forsooth!
 I'm doomed and dore for, since I spoke
 the truth.
 Make my own work the subject of dis-
 pute —
 Fails it of just perfection absolute 70
 Somewhere? Those motors, flexors, —
 don't I know
 Ser Santi, styled 'Tirititoto
 The pencil-prig,' might blame them?
 Yet my wife —
 Were he and his nicknamer brought to
 life,
 Tito and Titian, to pronounce again —
 Ask her who knows more. — I or the great
 Twain
 Our colourist and draughtsman!
 "I help her,
 Not she helps me; and neither shall demur
 Because my portion is —" he chose to
 think —
 "Quite other than a woman's: I may 80
 drink

At many waters, must repose by none —
Rather rise and fare forth, having done
Duty to one new excellence the more,
Ablent thereby, though impotent before
So much was gained of knowledge. Best
depart

From this last lady I have learned by
heart!"

Thus he concluded of himself — resigned
To play the man and master: "Man
boasts mind:

Woman, man's sport calls mistress, to the
same

10 Does body's suit and service. Would
she claim

— My placid Beatrice-wife — pretence
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,
He wistfully regards one whom — did
fate

Concede — he might accept queen, ab-
dicate

Kingship because of? — one of no meek
sort

But masterful as he: man's match in
short?

Oh, there's no secret I were best conceal!
Bicé shall know; and should a stray tear
steal

From out the blue eye, stain the rose
cheek — bah!

20 A smile, a word's gay reassurance — ah,
With kissing interspersed, — shall make
amends,

Turn pain to pleasure."

"What, in truth so ends

Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?"
Next day, asked Artemisia: "I'll divorce
Husband and wife no longer. Go your
ways,

Leave Rome! Viterbo owns no equal,
says

The bye-word, for fair women: you, no
doubt,

May boast a paragon all specks without,
Using the painter's privilege to choose

30 Among what's rarest. Will your wife re-
fuse

Acceptance from — no rival — of a gift?
You paint the human figure I make shift
Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is —
flowers.

Look now!"

She twitched aside a veiling cloth.

"Here is my keepsake — frame and pic-
ture both:

For see, the frame is all of flowers fes-
toon'd

About an empty space, — left thus, to
wound

No natural susceptibility:

40 How can I guess? 'Tis you must fill,
not I,

The central space with — her whom you
like best!

That is your business, mine has been the
rest.

But judge!"

How judge them? Each of

us, in flowers,

Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces:
no —

Here let each favourite unmolested blow
For one heart's homage, no tongue's
banal praise,

Whether the rose appealingly bade "Gaze
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone

The gaudy tulip!" or 'twas "Me alone

Rather do homage to, who lily am,
No unabashed rose!" "Do I vainly cram

My cup with sweets, your jonquil?"

"Why forget

Vernal endearments with the violet?"
So they contested yet concerted, all

As one, to circle round about, enthrall
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence
The midmost wonder, gained no matter
whence.

There's a tale extant, in a book I conned
Long years ago, which treats of things be- 6c
yond

The common, antique times and countries
queer

And customs strange to match. "'Tis
said, last year,"

(Recounts my author,) "that the King had
mind

To view his kingdom — guessed at from
behind

A palace-window hitherto. Announced
No sooner was such purpose than 'twas
pounced

Upon by all the ladies of the land —
Loyal but light of life: they formed a
band

Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since
Proudly they all combined to bear their 7c
prince.

Backs joined to breasts, — arms, legs,
— nay, ankles, wrists,

Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and
twists,

So interwoven lay that you believed
'Twas one sole beast of burden which
received

The monarch on its back, of breadth not
scant

Since fifty girls made one white elephant."
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and
hues

Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet
loose

Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct
No less in each combining flower that 8c
linked

With flower to form a fit environment
For — whom might be the painter's
heart's intent
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine?

"This glory-guarded middle space — is
mine?"

For me to fill?"

"For you, my Friend! We part,
Never perchance to meet again. Your
Art —

What if I mean it — so to speak — shall
wed

My own, be witness of the life we led
When sometimes it has seemed our souls
near found

10 Each one the other as its mate — unbound
Had yours been haply from the better
choice

— Beautiful Bicé: 'tis the common voice,
The crowning verdict. Make whom you
like best

Queen of the central space, and manifest
Your predilection for what flower beyond
All flowers finds favour with you. I am
fond

Of — say — yon rose's rich predominance,
While you — what wonder? — more af-
fect the glance

20 The gentler violet from its leafy screen
Ventures: so — choose your flower and
paint your queen!"

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,
Instructed and adroit. "Just as you
stand,

Stay and be made — would Nature but
relent —

By Art immortal!"

Every implement
In tempting reach — a palette primed,
each squeeze

Of oil-paint in its proper patch — with
these,

Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp!

He worked as he had never dared.

"Unclasp
My Art from yours who can!" — he cried
at length,

30 As down he threw the pencil — "Grace
from Strength

Dissociate, from your flowery fringe de-
tach

My face of whom it frames, — the feat
will match

What that of Time should Time from me
extract

Your memory, Artemisia!" And in
fact, —

What with the pricking impulse, sudden
glow

Of soul — head, hand co-operated so

That face was worthy of its frame, 'tis
said —

Perfect, suppose!

They parted. Soon instead
Of Rome was home, — of Artemisia —
well,

The placid-perfect wife. And it befell 40

That after the first incontestably
Blessedest of all blisses (— wherefore try
Your patience with embracings and the
rest

Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest
To his Penelope?) — there somehow came
The coolness which as duly follows flame.
So, one day, "What if we inspect the gifts
My Art has gained us?"

Now the wife uplifts
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain

Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in 50
vain

— Too loose on the fine finger, — vows
and swears

The jewel with two pendent pearls like
pears

Betters a lady's bosom — witness else!
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.

"Such spells
Subdue such natures — sex must worship
toys

— Trinkets and trash: yet, ah, quite other
joys

Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss
Of — such an one as her I know — not
this

My gentle consort with the milk for
blood!

Why, did it chance that in a careless mood 60
(In those old days, gone — never to re-
turn —

When we talked — she to teach and I to
learn)

I dropped a word, a hint which might
imply

Consorts exist — how quick flashed fire
from eye,

Brow blackened, lip was pinched by
furious lip!

I needed no reminder of my slip:

One warning taught me wisdom. Where-
as here . . .

Aha, a sportive fancy! Eh, what fear

Of harm to follow? Just a whim in-
dulged!

"My Beatrice, there's an undivulged 70
Surprise in store for you: the moment's
fit

For letting loose a secret: out with it!

Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate

These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church
and State:

Yet, may I tell you? Tastes so disagree!
There's one gift, preciouslest of all to me,
I doubt if you would value as well worth

The obvious sparkling gauds that men
unearth

For toy-cult mainly of you womankind;
Such make you marvel, I concede: while
blind

The sex proves to the greater marvel here
I veil to baulk its envy. Be sincere!
Say, should you search creation far and
wide,
Was ever face like this?"

He drew aside
The veil, displayed the flower-framed por-
trait kept
For private delectation.

No adept
In florist's lore more accurately named
10 And praised or, as appropriately, blamed
Specimen after specimen of skill,
Than Biccé. "Rightly placed the
daffodil —

Scarcely so right the blue germander.
Grey

Good mouse-ear! Hardly your auricula
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me
Scarlet not crimson, that anemone;
But there's amends in the pink saxifrage.
O darling dear ones, let me disengage
You innocents from what your harmlessness

20 Clasps lovingly! Out thou from their
caress,
Serpent!"

Whereat forth-flashing from her
coils

On coils of hair, the *spilla* in its toils
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything
kept

To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt
And — woe to all inside the coronal!
Stab followed stab, — cut, slash, she ruined
all

The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and
mouth

And dimples and endearment — North
and South,

East, West, the tatters in a fury flew:

30 There yawned the circlet. What remained
to do?

She flung the weapon, and, with folded
arms

And mien defiant of such low alarms
As death and doom beyond death, Biccé
stood

Passively statuesque, in quietude
Awaiting judgment.

And out judgment burst
With frank unloading of love's laughter,
first

Freed from its unsuspected source. Some
throe

Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let
flow

The joyance.

40 "Then you ever were, still are,
And henceforth shall be — no occulted star

But my resplendent Biccé, sun-revealed,
Full-rondure! Woman-glory unconcealed,
So front me, find and claim and take your
own —

My soul and body yours and yours alone,
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's
love, take —

Use your possession — stab or stay at will
Here — hating, saving — woman with the
skill

To make man beast or god!"

And so it proved:
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he
loved,

Past power to change, until his dying- 50
day, —

Good fellow! And I fain would hope —
some say

Indeed for certain — that our painter's
'toils

At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,
Were not so mediocre after all;

Perhaps the work appears unduly small
From having loomed too large in old es-
teem,

Patronised by late Papacy. I seem
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work

In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk
From moderately praising. He designed 60
Correctly, nor in colour lagged behind

His age: but both in Florence and in Rome
The elder race so make themselves at home

That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls

From out the heaped laudations of the
time

The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT.

He. AH, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder —

Bullfinch-bubbings, soft sounds suit- 70
ing

What sweet thoughts, I wonder?

Fine-pearled notes that surely

Gather, dewdrop-fashion,

Deep-down in some heart which
purely

Secrets globuled passion —

Passion insuppressive —

Such is piped, for certain;

Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive

'Tis, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open 80

We might spy the player —

Seek and find some sense which no
pen

Yet from singer, sayer,

Ever has extracted:

Never, to my knowledge,

Yet has pedantry enacted
That, in Cupid's College,
Just this variation
Of the old old yearning
Should by plain speech have salva-
tion,
Yield new men new learning.

"Love!" but what love, nicely
New from old parted,
Would the player teach precisely?
First of all, he started
In my brain Assurance —
Trust — entire Contentment —
Passion proved by much endurance;
Then came — not resentment,
No, but simply Sorrow:
What was seen had vanished:
Yesterday so blue! To-morrow
Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark! 'Tis Hope resurges,
Struggling through obstruction —
Forces a poor smile which verges
On Joy's introduction.
Now, perhaps, mere Musing:
"Holds earth such a wonder?
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing
Past thought's power to sunder!"
What? calm Acquiescence?
"Daisied turf gives room to
Trefoil, plucked once in her pres-
ence —
Growing by her tomb too!"

She. All's your fancy-spinning!
Here's the fact: a neighbour
Never-ending, still beginning,
Recreates his labour:
Deep o'er desk he drudges,
Adds, divides, subtracts and
Multiplies, until he judges
Noonday-hour's exact sand
Shows the hourglass emptied:
Then comes lawful leisure,
Minutes rare from toil exempted,
Fit to spend in pleasure.

Out then with — what treatise?
Youth's Complete Instructor
How to play the Flute. Quid petis?
Follow Youth's conductor
On and on, through *Easy*,
Up to *Harder, Hardest*
Flute-piece, till thou, flautist wheezy,
Possibly discardest
Tootlings hoarse and husky,
Mayst expend with courage
Breath — on tunes once bright now
dusky —
Meant to cool thy porridge.

That's an air of Tulou's
He maltreats persistent,

Till as lief I'd hear some Zulu's
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,
Madden native dances.
I'm the man's familiar:
Unexpectedness enhances
What your ear's auxiliar
— Fancy — finds suggestive.
Listen! That's *legato*
Rightly played, his fingers restive
Touch as if *staccato*.

He. Ah, you trick-betrayer!
Telling tales, unwise one?
So the secret of the player
Was — he could surprise one
Well-nigh into trusting
Here was a musician
Skilled consummately, yet lusting
Through no vile ambition
After making captive
All the world, — rewarded
Amplly by one stranger's rapture,
Common praise discarded.

So, without assistance
Such as music rightly
Needs and claims, — defying dis-
tance,
Overleaping lightly
Obstacles which hinder, —
He, for my approval,
All the same and all the kinder
Made mine what might move all
Earth to kneel adoring:
Took — while he piped Gounod's
Bit of passionate imploring —
Me for Juliet: who knows?

No! as you explain things,
All's mere repetition,
Practise-pother: of all vain things
Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort — never
Ending, still beginning —
After-what should pay endeavour
— Right-performance? winning
Weariness from you who,
Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting — Tu-whit, tu-
who —
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

She. Songs, Spring thought perfection,
Summer criticises:
What in May escaped detection,
August, past surprises,
Notes, and names each blunder.
You, the just-initiate,
Praise to heart's content (what
wonder?)
Tootlings I hear vitiate
Romeo's serenading —
I who, times full twenty,
Turned to ice — no ash-tops aiding —
At his *caldamente*.

So, 'twas distance altered
 Sharps to flats? The missing
 Bar when syncopation faltered
 (You thought — paused for kiss-
 ing!)
 Ash-tops too felonious
 Intercepted? Rather
 Say — they well-nigh made eupho-
 nious
 Discord, helped to gather
 Phrase, by phrase, turn patches
 Into simulated
 Unity which botching matches, —
 Scraps reintegrated.

He. Sweet, are you suggestive
 Of an old suspicion
 Which has always found me restive
 To its admonition
 When it ventured whisper
 "Fool, the strifes and struggles
 Of your trembler — blusher — lisper
 Were so many juggles,
 Tricks tried — oh, so often! —
 Which once more do duty,
 Find again a heart to soften,
 Soul to snare with beauty."

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,
 Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,
 Someone gains the prize: admire
 rose
 Would he, when noon's wedge —
 slow —
 Sure, has pushed, expanded
 Rathe pink to raw redness?
 Would he covet sloe when sanded
 By road-dust to deadness?
 So — restore their value!
 Ply a water-sprinkle!
 Then guess sloe is fingered, shall
 you?
 Find in rose a wrinkle?

Here what played Aquarius?
 Distance — ash-tops aiding,
 Reconciled scraps else contrarious,
 Brightened stuff fast fading.
 Distance — call your shyness:
 Was the fair one peevish?
 Coyness softened out of slyness.
 Was she cunning, thievish,
 All-but-proved impostor?
 Bear but one day's exile,
 Ugly traits were wholly lost or
 Screened by fancies flexible —

Ash-tops these, you take me?
 Fancies' interference
 Changed . . .
 But since I sleep, don't wake me!
 What if all's appearance?
 Is not outside seeming
 Real as substance inside?

Both are facts, so leave me dreaming.
 If who loses wins I'd
 Ever lose, — conjecture,
 From one phrase trilled deftly,
 All the piece. So, end your lecture,
 Let who lied be left lie!

"IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST —"

WHAT it was struck the terror into me?
 This, Publius: closer! while we wait our
 turn
 I'll tell you. Water's warm (they ring
 inside)
 At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.
 Here in the vestibule where now we sit,
 One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was
 such
 Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear
 While Lucius Varius Rufus¹ in their midst
 Read out that long-planned late-completed
 piece,
 His Panegyric on the Emperor.
 "Nobody like him" little Flaccus² laughed
 "At leading forth an Epos with due pomp!
 Only, when godlike Cæsar swells the
 theme,
 How should mere mortals hope to praise
 aright?
 Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings!"
 Whereat Mæcenas smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans,³ left the Thermæ's
 roar
 Of rapture as the poet asked "What place
 Among the godships Jove, for Cæsar's sake,
 Would bid its actual occupant vacate
 In favour of the new divinity?"
 And got the expected answer "Yield thine
 own!" —
 Jove thus dethroned, I somehow wanted
 air,
 And found myself a-pacing street and
 street,
 Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome,
 Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub —
 say
 As if thought's dance therein had kicked
 up dust
 By trampling on all else: the world lay
 prone,
 As — poet-propped, in brave hexameters —
 Their subject triumphed up from man to
 God.
 Caius Octavius Cæsar the August —
 Where was escape from his prepotency?
 I judge I may have passed — how many
 piles

¹ Poet and friend of Virgil. ² Horace.
³ Roman coin of small value.

- Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand
To Rome on every side? Why, right and left,
For temples you've the Thundering Jupiter,
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine:
How count Piazza, Forum — there's a third
All but completed. You've the Theatre
Named of Marcellus — all his work, such work! —
One thought still ending, dominating all —
With warrant Varius sang "Be Cæsar God!"
- 10 By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth
Through Fortune, if you like, but favour no!
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights —
Those conquests! but peace crowned them, — so, of peace!
Count up his titles only — these, in few —
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times,
Emperor, nay — the glory topping all —
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best
- 20 Of titles, by himself accepted so:
And why not? See but feats achieved in Rome —
Not to say, Italy — he planted there
Some thirty colonies — but Rome itself
All new-built, "marble now, brick once,"
he boasts:
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail?
He has drained Tiber for you: would you walk?
He strengthened out the long Flaminian Way.
Poor? Profit by his score of donatives!
Rich — that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games
- 30 Challenge your choice! There's Rome — for you and me
Only? The centre of the world besides!
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome?
To sunrise? There's Euphrates — all between!
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:
North, — stare till Danube stops you:
South, see Nile,
The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.
Well may the poet-people each with each
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,
Virgil and Horace, singers — in their way —
- 40 Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:
Well may they cry, "No mortal, plainly God!"
- Thus to myself myself said, while I walked.
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech,
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound
Its depths — this masterdom o'er all the world
Of one who was but born, — like you, like me,
Like all the world he owns, — of flesh and blood.
But he — how grasp, how gauge his own conceit
Of bliss to me near inconceivable? 50
Or — since such flight too much makes reel the brain —
Let's sink — and so take refuge, as it were,
From life's excessive altitude — to life's
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!
If looms thus large this Cæsar to myself
— Of senatorial rank and somebody —
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd,
Innumerable swarm that's nobody at all?
Why, — for an instance, — much as yon gold shape
Crowned, sceptred, on the temple oppo- 60
site —
Fulgurant Jupiter — must daze the sense
Of — say, yon outcast begging from its step!
What, anti-Cæsar, monarch in the mud,
As he is pinnaced above thy pate?
Ay, beg away! thy lot contrasts full well
With his whose bounty yields thee this support —
Our Holy and Inviolable One,
Cæsar, whose bounty built the fane above!
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack,
displays
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain — 70
Faugh! Wash though in Subura!¹
¹Ware the dogs
Who may not so disdain a meal on thee!
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms?
Aha, why yes: I must appear — who knows? —
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee —
Quæstor nay, Edile, Censor Pol!
perhaps
The very City-Prætor's noble self!
As to me Cæsar, so to thee am I?
Good: nor in vain shall prove thy quest,
poor rogue!
Hither — hold palm out — take this 80
quarter-as!
- And' who did take it? As he raised his head,
(My gesture was a trifle — well, abrupt)

¹ Street of ill-repute in Rome.

Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,
 The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek
 Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse — just one!
 One was enough. Whose — whose might be the face?
 That unkempt careless hair — brown, yellowish —
 Those sparkling eyes beneath their eye-brows' ridge
 (Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)
 — That was enough, no glimpse was needed more!
 And terrifyingly into my mind
 10 Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us,
 "They do say, once a year in sordid garb
 He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,
 Asking and taking alms of who may pass,
 And so averting, if submission help,
 Fate's envy, the dread chance and change of things
 When Fortune — for a word, a look, a nought —
 Turns spiteful and — the petted lioness —
 Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each
 Who patted late her neck superiorly,
 * Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed."
 "He's God!" shouts Lucius Varius Rufus:
 "Man
 And worms'—meat any moment!" mutters low
 Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.
 Ay, do you mind? There's meaning in the fact
 That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters Rome,
 Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus
 To glory's summit, — Publius, do you mark —
 Ever the same attendant who, behind,
 Above the Conqueror's head supports the crown
 20 All-too-demonstrative for human wear,
 — One hand's employment — all the while reserves
 Its fellow, backward flung, to point how, close
 Appended from the car, beneath the foot
 Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,
 Frown — half-descried — the instruments of shame,
 The malefactor's due. Crown, now — Cross, when?
 Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?

Jupiter that just now is dominant —
 Are not there ancient dismal tales how once
 A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came, 4
 And who can say if Jupiter be last?
 Was it for nothing the grey Sibyl wrote
 "Cæsar Augustus regnant, shall be born
 In blind Judæa" — one to master him,
 Him and the universe? An old-wife's tale?

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our turn next.
 No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!
 Two strigils,¹ two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

DEVELOPMENT.

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
 When I was five years old, I asked him 50
 once
 "What do you read about?"
 "The siege of Troy."
 "What is a siege and what is Troy?"
 Whereat
 He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
 Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
 — Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
 By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
 Under the footstool, being cowardly,
 But whom — since she was worth the pains, poor puss —
 Towzer and Tray, — our dogs, the Atreidai, — sought
 By taking Troy to get possession of 60
 — Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
 (My pony in the stable) — forth would prance
 And put to flight Hector — our page-boy's self.
 This taught me who was who and what was what:
 So far I rightly understood the case
 At five years old: a huge delight it proved
 And still proves — thanks to that instructor sage
 My Father, who knew better than turn straight
 Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
 Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow 70
 sand-blind,
 Content with darkness and vacuity.
 It happened, two or three years afterward,
 That — I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege —
 My Father came upon our make-believe.

¹ A flesh-brush.

"How would you like to read yourself the tale

Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear?
Pope, now, would give you the precise
account

Of what, some day, by dint of scholar-
ship,

You'll hear — who knows? — from
Homer's very mouth.

Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind
Old Man,

Sweetest of Singers' — *tuphlos* which
means 'blind,'

Hedistos which means 'sweetest.' Time
enough!

10 Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!"

So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale — what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised
next —

The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn — say, Buttmann to
account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one
fine day,

"Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?"

20 There's Heine, where the big books block
the shelf:

Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexi-
con!"

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I
learned

Who was who, what was what, from
Homer's tongue,

And there an end of learning. Had you
asked

The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years
old,

"Who was it wrote the Iliad?" — what a
laugh!

"Why, Homer, all the world knows: of
his life

Doubtless some facts exist: it's every-
where:

We have not settled, though, his place of
birth:

30 He begged, for certain, and was blind
beside:

Seven cities claimed him — Scio, with best
right,

Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those
Hymns we have.

Then there's the 'Battle of the Frogs and
Mice,'

That's all — unless they dig 'Margites' up
(I'd like that) nothing more remains to
know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until — "What's this the Germans say is
fact

That Wolf found out first? It's unpleas-
ant work

Their chop and change, unsettling one's
belief:

All the same, while we live, we learn, that's 40
sure."

So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena*.

And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like

Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged, — nay,

worse, —

No actual Homer, no authentic text,

No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,

Had treasured in my heart and soul so
long —

Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still
hold,

Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of
hearts

And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and 50
fixed

From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.

Assuredly thenceforward — thank my
stars! —

However it got there, deprive who could —
Wring from the shrine my precious
tenantry,

Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend? — though Wolf

— ah, Wolf!

Why must he needs come doubting, spoil
a dream?

But then "No dream's worth waking" —
Browning says:

And here's the reason why I tell thus much 60
I, now mature man, you anticipate,

May blame my Father justifiably

For letting me dream out my nonage thus,

And only by such slow and sure degrees

Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,

Get truth and falsehood known and
named as such.

Why did he ever let me dream at all,

Not bid me taste the story in its strength?

Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified

To rightly understand mythology,

Silence at least was in his power to keep: 70

I might have — somehow — correspond-
ingly —

Well, who knows by what method, gained
my gains,

Been taught, by forthrights not meander-
ings,

My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus'
son,

A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,

Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.

Could not I have excogitated this

Without believing such men really were?

That is — he might have put into my hand

The "Ethics"? In translation, if you please,

Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less —

The "Ethics": 'tis a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is grey,
And I can manage the original.

At five years old — how ill had fared its leaves!

Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,

10 Nor crumple, dogsear and deface — boys' way.

REPHAN.¹

[The prose story referred to, in the note is "How it Strikes a Stranger" in the Contributions of Q. Q. Probably no child has ever wholly forgotten this story if he or she had the good luck to read it in infancy. These Taylors lived at Ongar, not Norwich.]

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours, — like you, made man, —

When my home was the Star of my God
Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt

Or deepest despondency keeps you out?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your weak,

Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek —

20 Diseased in the body, sick in soul
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth, — your whole

Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which o'erwhelm

Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,

Let drive the sail, dare unconfined

30 Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind!

¹ Suggested by a very early recollection of a prose story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Norwich. — R. B.

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all's at most — not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want — whatever should be, is now:
No growth — that's change, and change comes — how

To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins — so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

46

I use your language: mine — no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,

To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What — in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things

Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,

No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

50

All happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that's checked or grows

As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed
rose —

Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around — rose-red: 60
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I — would prove I lacked
Somewhat: one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection
irked? —

Till out of its peace at length grew strife —
Hopes, fears, loves, hates, — obscurely
rise, —

My life grown a-tremble to turn your life? 72

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gate of Rephan my Star?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardours till forth from its orb are sent

o New petals that mar — unmake the disc —
Spoil rondure: what in it an brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright,
brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and
spread
Till, fresh-formed, faceted, floreted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead?

No mimic of Star Rephan! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but dif-
ference
In thing and thing, that should shock my
sense
With a want of worth in them all, and
thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me — height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
30 Supremacy ever — to move, remove,

Not reach — aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain, —
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one
bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance, — just
for this —
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonise, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

40 Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall
mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings
tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant
breast

A voice said "So wouldst thou strive, not
rest?"

"Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that's
dearth?"

Thou art past Rephan, thy place be
Earth!"

REVERIE.

I KNOW there shall dawn a day
— Is it here on homely earth? 50

Is it yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
That Power comes full in play?

Is it here, with grass about,
Under befriending trees,
When shy buds venture out,
And the air by mild degrees
Puts winter's death past doubt?

Is it up amid whirl and roar 60
Of the elemental flame
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,
That, new yet still the same,
Full in play comes Power once more?

Somewhere, below, above,
Shall a day dawn — this I know —
When Power, which vainly strove
My weakness to o'erthrow,
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move,

I truly am, at last! 70
For a veil is rent between
Me and the truth which passed
Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,
Grasped at — not gained, held fast.

I for my race and me
Shall apprehend life's law:
In the legend of man shall see
Writ large what small I saw
In my life's tale: both agree.

As the record from youth to age 80
Of my own, the single soul —
So the world's wide book: one page
Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

How but from near to far
Should knowledge proceed, increase?
Try the clod ere test the star!
Bring our inside strife to peace
Ere we wage, on the outside, war!

So, my annals thus begin:
With body, to life awoke 90

Soul, the immortal twin
Of body which bore soul's yoke
Since mortal and not akin.

By means of the flesh, grown fit,
Mind, in surview of things,
Now soared, anon alit
To treasure its gatherings
From the ranged expanse — to-wit,

10 Nature, — earth's, heaven's wide show
Which taught all hope, all fear:
Acquainted with joy and woe,
I could say "Thus much is clear,
Doubt annulled thus much: I know.

"All is effect of cause:
As it would, has willed and done
Power: and my mind's applause
Goes, passing laws each one,
To Omnipotence, lord of laws."

20 Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns.

Yet since Earth's good proved good —
Incontrovertibly
Worth loving — I understood
How evil — did mind descry
Power's object to end pursued —

30 Were haply as cloud across
God's orb, no orb itself:
Mere mind — were it found at loss
Did it play the tricky elf
And from life's gold purge the dross?

Power is known infinite:
Good struggles to be — at best
Seems — scanned by the human sight,
'Tried by the senses' test —
Good palpably: but with right

40 Therefore to mind's award
Of loving, as power claims praise?
Power — which finds nought too hard,
Fulfilling itself all ways
Unchecked, unchanged: while barred,

Baffled, what good began
Ends evil on every side.
To Power submissive man
Breathes "E'en as Thou art, abide!"
While to good "Late-found, long-sought,

50 "Would Power to a plenitude
But liberate, but enlarge
Good's strait confine, — renewed
Were ever the heart's discharge
Of loving!" Else doubts intrude.

For you dominate, stars all!
For a sense informs you — brute,
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,
Each with your attribute
Or low or majestic!

Thou earth that embosomest
Offspring of land and sea —
How thy hills first sank to rest,
How thy vales bred herb and tree
Which dizen thy mother-breast —

Do I ask? "Be ignorant
Ever!" the answer clangs:
Whereas if I plead world's want,
Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,
Play the human applicant, —

Is a remedy far to seek?
I question and find response:
I — all men, strong or weak,
Conceive and declare at once
For each want its cure. "Power, speak!"

"Stop change, avert decay,
Fix life fast, banish death,
Eclipse from the star bid stay,
Abridge of no moment's breath
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!"

What need to confess again
No problem this to solve
By impotence? Power, once plain
Proved Power, — let on Power devolve
Good's right to co-equal reign!

Past mind's conception — Power!
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,
Bird, worm, fly, gained their dower
For life's use, most and least?
Back from the search I cower.

Do I seek what heals all harm,
Nay, hinders the harm at first,
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!
Keep the life there unamerced
By chance, change, death's alarm!

As promptly as mind conceives,
Let Power in its turn declare
Some law which wrong retrieves,
Abolishes everywhere
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves!

Never to be! and yet
How easy it seems — to sense
Like man's — if somehow met
Power with its match — immense
Love, limitless, unbeset

By hindrance on every side!
Conjectured, nowise known,
Such may be: could man confide

Such would match — were Love but shown

Strip of the veils that hide —

Power's self now manifest!

So reads my record: thine,

O world, how pure —! Gossamer

Were the purport of that prime line,
Prophetic of all the rest!

"In a beginning God

Made heaven and earth!" Forth dashed

Knowledge from that time

Man knew things — that dashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.

Had it not been manifest,

Enough of its loveless stain.

Unchequered as unexpressed.

In all things Good at best —

Then praise — all praise, no blame —

Had hailed the perfection. No!

As Power's display, the same

Be Good's — praise forth shall flow

Unisonous in acclaim!

Even as the world its life,

So have I lived my own —

Power seen with Love at strife,

That strife, this unity shown,

— Good part and evil rife

Whereof the effect be — faith

That, some far day, were found

Rightness in things now rather

Wrong, righted, each claim unbound,

Renewal born out of scathe.*

Why faith — sure to lift the load,

To leaven the lump, where lies

Mind prostrate through knowledge owed

To the loveless Power it tries

To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact

No more than the passive clay

Disputes the potter's art.

Could the dreamed mind disobey

Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,

Has the potter's moulded shape,

Leap of man's quickened heart,

Three of his thought's escape,

Stings of his soul, which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen

See things from the calm and clear.

Through turbidity all between,

From the known to the unknown here,

Heaven's "Shall be," from Earth's "Has
been"? —

* Early.

* Harm.

That Power is — the power that sleep

Rise and the rest, that Power

From earth's loveless Power — sleep

Things perfect, all things at rest.

To the Power's world, the world sleep.

Where, amid what strifes and storms

May wait the adventurous quest,

Power is Love — transports, transforms 64

Who aspired from worst to best,

Sought the soul's world, spurned the
worms'.

I have faith such end shall be

From the first, Power was — I knew.

Life has made clear to me

That, strive but for closer view,

Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,

If not on the homely earth,

Then yonder, worlds away,

Where the strange and new have birth, 70

And Power comes full in play.

EPILOGUE.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-
time,

When you set your fancies free,

Will they pass to where — by death, fools

the world expressed —

Low he lies who once so loved you, whom

you loved so,

— Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!

What had I on earth to do

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the 80

unmanly?

Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I

drivel

— Being — who?

One who never turned his back but
marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted,

wrong would triumph.

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight

better,

Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's
worktime

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

Bid him forward, breast and back as either 87

should be,

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight

on, fare ever

There as here!"

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS.

1833. PAULINE: A Fragment of a Confession.
1835. PARACELSUS.
1837. STRAFFORD: An Historical Tragedy.
1840. SORDELLO.
1841. Bells and Pomegranates, No. I., PIPPA PASSES.
1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. II., KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.
1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. III., DRAMATIC LYRICS.
Cavalier Tunes —
I. Marching Along.
II. Give a Rouse.
III. My Wife Gertrude.¹
Italy and France —
I. Italy.²
II. France.³
Camp and Cloister —
I. Camp (French).⁴
II. Cloister (Spanish).⁵
In a Gondola.
Artemis Prologuizes.
Waring.
Queen Worship —
I. Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli.
II. Cristina.
Madhouse Cells —
I. [Johannes Agricola].⁶
II. [Porphyria].⁷
Through the Metidja to Abdel-Kadr, 1842.
The Pied Piper of Hamelin.
1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. IV., THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES: A Tragedy in Five Acts.
1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. V., A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON: A Tragedy in Three Acts.
1844. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VI., COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY: A Play in Five Acts.
1845. Bells and Pomegranates, VII., DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS —
How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.
Pictor Ignotus, Florence, 15—. Italy in England.⁸
England in Italy.⁹
The Lost Leader.
The Lost Mistress.
Home Thoughts from Abroad (I. "Oh to be in England."
II. "Here's to Nelson's Memory."¹⁰ III. "Nobly Cape St. Vincent."¹¹)
The Tomb at St. Praxed's.¹²
Garden Fancies —
I. The Flower's Name.¹³
II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis.¹⁴
France and Spain —
I. The Laboratory (Ancien Régime).¹⁵
II. The Confessional.
The Flight of the Duchess.¹⁶
Earth's Immortalities.
Song, "Nay but you, who do not love her."
The Boy and the Angel.¹⁷
Night and Morning (I. Night,¹⁸ II. Morning).¹⁹
Claret and Tokay.²⁰
- ¹ Afterwards called "Boot and Saddle."
² Afterwards called "My Last Duchess."
³ Afterwards called "Count Gismond."
⁴ Afterwards called "Incident of the French Camp."
⁵ Afterwards called "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister."
⁶ Afterwards called "Johannes Agricola in Meditation," was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 45, 46.
⁷ Afterwards called "Porphyria's Lover," was first printed in *The Monthly Repository*, vol. x. N.S. 1836, pp. 43, 44.
⁸ Afterwards called "The Italian in England."
⁹ Afterwards called "The Englishman in Italy."
¹⁰ Afterwards printed as the third section of "Nationality in Drinks."
¹¹ Afterwards called "Home Thoughts from the Sea."
¹² Afterwards called "The Bishop orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church," was first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. March 1845, pp. 237-239.
¹³, ¹⁴ First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. July 1844, pp. 45-48.
¹⁵ First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. i. June 1844, pp. 513, 514.
¹⁶ Sections 1 to 9, first printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. iii. April 1845, pp. 313-318.
¹⁷ First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. ii. August 1844, pp. 140-142.
¹⁸ Afterwards called "Meeting at Night."
¹⁹ Afterwards called "Parting at Morning."
²⁰ Afterwards printed as the first and second sections of "Nationality in Drinks."

DRAMATIC ROMANCES—*Con.*

- Saul.[†]
 Time's Revenges.
 The Glove.
1846. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VIII.
 and last, LURIA; and: A
 SOUL'S TRAGEDY.
1850. CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EAS-
 TER-DAY.
1855. MEN AND WOMEN. In Two
 Volumes—
- Vol. I. Love among the Ruins.
 A Lovers' Quarrel.
 Evelyn Hope.
 Up at a Villa—Down in the City.
 (As distinguished by an Italian
 Person of Quality.)
 A Woman's Last Word.
 Fra Lippo Lippi.
 A Toccata of Gallupi's.
 By the Fireside.
 Any Wife to Any Husband.
 An Epistle containing the Strange
 Medical Experience of Kar-
 shish, the Arab Physician.
 Mesmerism.
 A Serenade at the Villa.
 My Star.
 Instans Tyrannus.
 A Pretty Woman.
 "Childe Roland to the Dark
 Tower came."
 Respectability.
 A Light Woman.
 The Statue and the Bust.
 Love in a Life.
 Life in a Love.
 How it Strikes a Contempo-
 rary.
 The Last Ride Together.
 The Patriot: An Old Story.
 Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.
 Bishop Blougram's Apology.
 Memorabilia.
- Vol. II. Andrea del Sarto (called "The
 Faultless Painter").
 Before.
 After.
 In Three Days.
 In a Year.
 Old Pictures in Florence.
 In a Balcony.
 Saul. (See note ¹.)
 "De Gustibus—"
 Women and Roses.
 Protus.
 Holy-Cross Day.
 The Guardian Angel: A Picture
 at Fano.
 Cleon.

MEN AND WOMEN—*Con.*

- The Twins.²
 Popularity.
 The Heretic's Tragedy. A Mid-
 dle-Age Interlude.
 Two in the Campagna.
 A Grammarian's Funeral.
 One Way of Love.
 Another Way of Love.
 "Transcendentalism:" A Poem
 in Twelve Books.
 Misconceptions.
 One Word More. To E. B. B.
1864. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—
 James Lee.
 Gold Hair: A Legend of Portia.³
 The Worst of it.
 Dis aliter visum; or Le Byrron,
 de nos Jours.
 Too Late.
 Abt Vogler.
 Rabbi Ben Ezra.
 A Death in the Desert.
 Caliban upon Setebos; or, Nat-
 ural Theology in the Is-
 land.
 Confessions.
 May and Death.⁴
 Prospice.⁵
 Youth and Art.
 A Face.
 A Likeness.
 Mr. Sludge, "The Medium."
 Apparent Failure.
 Epilogue.
1864. Orpheus and Eurydice. F. Leigh-
 ton.⁶
1868. Deaf and Dumb.⁷
- 1868-9. THE RING AND THE BOOK.
 In Four Volumes.
1871. BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE,
 including a Transcript from
 Euripides.
1871. PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-
 SCHWANGAU, SAVIOUR OF
 SOCIETY.
1872. FIFINE AT THE FAIR.
1873. RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP
 COUNTRY, OR TURF AND
 TOWERS.

² First printed in a pamphlet entitled "Two Poems. By Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning." 8vo. London, 1854.

³ First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. May 1864, p. 596.

⁴ First printed in *The Keepsake* for 1857.

⁵ First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii. June 1864, p. 694.

⁶ First printed in the Catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition 1864, afterwards called "Eurydice to Orpheus."

⁷ First printed in "The Poetical Works of Robert Browning," six vols. 1868; vol. vi. p. 151.

[†] First part only (sections 1-9); the second part was added and included with it in "Men and Women," 1855, vol. ii. p. 111.

1875. ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY,
including a Transcript from Euripides, being the Last Adventure of Balaustion.
1875. THE INN ALBUM.
1876. PACCHIAROTTO AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER: with other Poems —
Prologue.
Of Pacchiarotto and how he worked in Distemper.
At the "Mermaid." House.
Shop.
Pisgah Sights. I.
Pisgah Sights. II.
Fears and Scruples.
Natural Magic.
Magical Nature.
Bifurcation.
Numpholeptos.
Appearances.
St. Martin's Summer.
Hervé Riel.¹
A Forgiveness.
Cenciaja.
Filippo Balducci on the Privilege of Burial.
Epilogue.
1877. THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS.
1878. LA SAISIAZ.²
1878. THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC³
1879. DRAMATIC IDYLS —
Martin Ralph.
Pheidippides.
Halbert and Hob.
Ivàn Ivànovitch.
Tray.
Ned Bratts.
1880. DRAMATIC IDYLS: SECOND SERIES —
[Prologue.]
Echetlos.
Clive.
Muléykeh.
Pietro of Abano.
Doctor —.
Pan and Luna.
[Epilogue.]
1883. JOCOSERIA —
Wanting is — What?
Donald.
Solomon and Balkis.
Cristina and Monaldeschi.
Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli —
Adam, Lilith, and Eve.
Ixion.
Jochanan Hakkadosh.
Never the Time and the Place.
Pambo.

1884. FERISHTAH'S FANCIES —
Prologue.
1. The Eagle.
2. Melon-Seller.
3. Shah Abbas.
4. The Family.
5. The Sun.
6. Mihrab Shah.
7. A Camel-Driver.
8. Two Camels.
9. Cherries.
10. Plot-Culture.
11. A Pillar at Sebzevah.
12. A Bean-Stripe: also, Apple-Eating.
Epilogue.
1887. PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY. To wit: Bernard de Mandeville, Daniel Bartoli, Christopher Smart, George Bubb Dodington, Francis Furini, Gerard de Lairese, and Charles Avison. Introduced by a Dialogue between Apollo and the Fates; concluded by another between John Fust and his Friends.
- 1880.⁴ ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS —
Prologue.
Rosny.
Dubiety.
Now.
Humility.
Poetics.
Summum Bonum.
A Pearl, A Girl.
Speculative.
White Witchcraft.
Bad Dreams. I.
Bad Dreams. II.
Bad Dreams. III.
Bad Dreams. IV.
Inapprehensiveness.
Which?
The Cardinal and the Dog.
The Pope and the Net.
The Bean-Feast.
Muckle-mouth Meg.
Arcades Ambo.
The Lady and the Painter.
Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice.
Beatrice Signorini.
Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment.
"Imperante Augusto natus est —"
Development.
Rephan.
Reverie.
Epilogue.

¹ First printed in *The Cornhill Magazine*, March 1871.

^{2, 3} Published together in one volume.

⁴ Published on December 12th, 1880, the day of Mr. Browning's death.

APPENDIX

OF THE BROWNING MSS.

BY FREDERIC G. KENYON

THE sale room of Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge in the first week of May 1913 was a melancholy sight for the lovers of English literature. On the hundred and first anniversary of Robert Browning's birth, a large portion of his library, containing many volumes presented to him and his wife by friends, relations, and admirers, and many with their own autograph inscriptions, were dispersed under the auctioneer's hammer. The next day their personal relics—photographs, busts, chairs, tables, inkstands, blotting books, penwipers, Mrs. Browning's watch, a locket with Milton's hair, and the love token which formed the subject of the Sonnet from the Portuguese beginning "I never gave a lock of hair away"—passed through the same unsympathetic medium—it may be hoped, into the keeping of those who will cherish them with fitting affection. Two days earlier, a crowded room witnessed the sight of rival dealers competing for the autograph MSS. of "Aurora Leigh," of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and, most intimate and sacred of all, the love-letters of the two poets; to be informed afterwards that they had been purchased by the victors in the several duels, not on commission for devoted admirers of Robert and Elizabeth Browning, but as articles to be placed in their stock and disposed of to the first purchaser prepared to pay the price to which this competition had forced them up.

It was a sorry sight; and yet it was one not for which any of those who were concerned in the sale as principals could be blamed. So far as could be ascertained, all the nearest relations on both sides were anxious to avoid a sale, and particularly a public sale, and would have been prepared, if a sale were inevitable, that at any rate the most personal and intimate objects should pass into some national collection, as a permanent memorial of the two poets. But amid the tangle of different interests, the claims of creditors, the advice of lawyers and auctioneers, sentiment had small chance in competition with legal safety, and a public sale could not be averted. With the results, at any rate the creditors will be satisfied, and presumably the lawyers, auctioneers, and dealers will have no cause to complain; and with this modicum of satisfaction one must be content.

Perhaps one may find other grounds of consolation. The disposal of the minor volumes in the poet's library will, no doubt, have enabled many of the devotees of Robert Browning to secure as mementos books which once belonged to him, and which bear inscriptions in his handwriting. The larger manuscripts were few in number. There was, of course, first of all in sentimental interest, the wonderful collection of those 284 letters which Robert Browning wrote to Elizabeth Barrett between January 10, 1845, and September 19, 1846, and the 287 which he received from her during the same period. These, so far as is at present publicly known, await a purchaser who will make a sufficient advance on the £650 for which they were knocked down by Messrs. Sotheby. There was the MS. of Robert Browning's last volume, "Asolando," purchased for £900—it is understood for America. There were two copies, one perfect and one imperfect, of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," Elizabeth Barrett's high-water mark in poetry, and there was the complete MS. of "Aurora Leigh," which Ruskin declared to be the greatest poem in the English language. Further, there were several hundreds of Mrs. Browning's letters, before and after marriage, to various correspondents, of which the cream has, no doubt, in the main been skimmed off for previous publication, but of which many remain unpublished. With regard to the "Asolando" volume, which the poet intended to go to Balliol College, with the rest of his MSS. from "Balaustion" to the "Parleyings," and which his son retained only for his own lifetime, one may regret that their expressed desire has been balked of its fulfilment; but with respect to the others, however much one may wish that they could have remained in England, it is only fair to remember that America, where appreciation of both poets, and especially of Robert Browning, was earlier and more enthusiastic than in England, has earned the right to possess any of these relics which she cares to acquire, and will respect them not less than they would have been respected here. Readers of Mrs. Browning's letters will not doubt that both of them would have gladly recognised the claims of America in this respect. And it is to be remembered, finally, that the two greatest MSS. of all, the complete "Ring and the Book" and the copy of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" which Mrs. Browning gave to her husband

in the early days of their marriage (pushing them into his pocket and hastily retiring from the room), which were until recently in the hands to which they were given by the poet and by the poet's son—those of the late Mrs. George Murray Smith, the wife of Browning's publisher and most valued friend—are still treasured in her family. It is also good to know that the surviving copyright in all things Browning now belongs to the firm which have been the Browning publishers since 1868, Smith, Elder & Co.

But among the minor manuscripts were many which have a literary as well as a sentimental interest. One might perhaps wish that the unpublished verses of both poets had been destroyed by them out of hand when once the decision had been taken not to publish them. Such waifs and strays are a permanent difficulty to editors. If the author is sufficiently eminent, publication of everything of his that remains above ground is eventually inevitable, and an editor is torn between the natural desire to make his edition complete, and his equally natural reluctance to print matter which is not worthy of its author, and which the author himself did not consider worthy of publication. The ultimate solution is probably some limbo of an appendix, which can be searched once for all by the curious and then left to its obscurity. Yet even in such an outer darkness one does not care to meet Browning's freakish rhymes to "rhinoceros" or "Timbuctoo"; while it is an injustice to two, if not three, of the stars of our Victorian literature to reprint, at any time or in any place, the "Lines to Edward FitzGerald."

One little group of manuscripts, however, in the delicate handwriting of Mrs. Browning, has a special interest, personal and literary, and its publication can do no harm to anyone. In September and October 1845 Robert Browning was engaged in preparing for the press the poems which were published in November as Part VII of his "Bells and Pomegranates," under the general title of "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics." Five of them had previously appeared in *Hood's Magazine* during 1844 and the spring of 1845, and these had come to Miss Barrett's notice in July; the rest were sent to her in manuscript and proof in the course of the autumn. Her criticisms were asked for honestly and were sent loyally; and they lie before us now in these little sheets. They are not criticisms in the larger sense of the term, not appreciations of the general scheme of the poems, but merely suggestions for verbal alterations, the little queries which a friend may make of a friend's work, especially when the critic is himself (or herself, as in this instance) a poet. Those who do not care for the minutiae of poetic production, or are content with

the result without inquiring as to the means, will have no concern with these; but some of those whose interests are bound up with the poetry of Robert Browning may care to see how the poet who was afterwards to be his wife helped him.

Those who have any acquaintance with the bibliography of Browning's poetry (and some such acquaintance is really essential to an understanding of the development of his genius, since the familiar classification of the shorter poems has obscured their chronological order) know that the original "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics" of 1845 are a very different group of poems from the "Dramatic Romances" as they appear in every edition after 1863. Part VII of "Bells and Pomegranates" consisted of twenty-one poems. Of these, only six remained under the heading of "Dramatic Romances" in 1863. Thirteen were transferred to the "Dramatic Lyrics," and two to "Men and Women," where we still find them to-day. Of the original twenty-one, twelve receive annotations from Miss Barrett in the papers now before us, in addition to "A Soul's Tragedy" and "Luria," which formed the eighth and last part of "Bells and Pomegranates," published a few months later, in April 1846. These twelve poems include the five which had previously appeared in *Hood's Magazine* ("The Tomb at St. Praxed's," "The Flower's Name," "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis," "The Laboratory," and "The Boy and the Angel"), together with "How they brought the Good News," "Pictor Ignotus," "Italy in England," "England in Italy," "The Confessional," "Saul," and "Time's Revenges." In addition, some comments (but of a more general nature) on "The Lost Leader," "The Lost Mistress," "Home Thoughts from Abroad," "The Flight of the Duchess," "Earth's Immortalities," "Nay, but you who do not love her," "Night and Morning," "Claret and Tokay," and "The Glove," which constitute the rest of the volume, appear in the published letters, and so complete Miss Barrett's criticisms on the whole group of poems.

These criticisms for the most part relate to small details of phrase or rhythm. It is curious to find Elizabeth Barrett, whose ear, to judge from her own poetry, was not remarkably sensitive, criticising the imperfect rhythm of Robert Browning. But Miss Barrett was a better critic than poet at this period (which, be it remembered, was before the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" and "Aurora Leigh"); and it is rather in imperfect rhymes than in defective rhythms that her ear is mostly at fault. On the other hand, Browning in his earlier lyrics had a certain staccato jerkiness, of which he subsequently cured himself; and most readers

will agree that his correspondent's criticisms were justified. Miss Barrett's notes upon "Saul" will illustrate this point, and at the same time furnish a fair sample of her comments in general:

"Nor till from his tent

Would you not rather write 'until,' here, to break the course of monosyllables, with another reason?

"For in the black mid-tent silence
Three drear days—

A word seems omitted before 'silence'—and the short line is too short to the ear—not to say that 'drear days' conspires against 'drear ways' found afterwards. And the solemn flow of the six lines should be uninterrupted, I think.

"The entrance of David into the tent is very visible and characteristic,—and you see his youthfulness in the activity of it,—and the repetition of the word 'foldskirts' has an Hebraic effect.

"But soon I descried
Something more black than the blackness.

Should it not be 'A something'—more definitely? And the rhythm cries aloud for it, it seems to me.

"The vast, upright—

Quære—'the upright' . . . for rhythm.

"Then a sunbeam burst thro' the blind tent—
roof
Showed Saul.

Now, will you think whether to enforce the admirable effect of your sudden sunbeam, this first line shall not be rendered more rapid by the removal of the clogging epithet 'blind'—which you repeat, too, I believe, farther on in the next page? What if you tried the line thus,

"Then a sunbeam that burst through the tent—
roof—
Showed Saul!

The manifestation in the short line appears to me completer from the rapidity being increased in the long one. I only ask. It is simply an impression. I have told you how very fine I do think all this showing of Saul by the sunbeam—and how, the more you come to see him, the finer it is. The 'all heavily hangs,' as applied to the king-serpent, you quite feel in your muscles.

"The breaking of the band of lilies round the harp is a relief and refreshment in itself after that dreadful sight. And then how beautifully true it is that the song should begin so . . . with the sheep—

"As one after one
Docile they come to the pen door—

But the rhythm should not interrupt itself where the sheep come docilely—and is not a word wanted . . . a syllable rather . . . before that 'Docile'? Will you consider?

"The long grasses stifling the water' . . .
How beautiful *that* is!

"One after one seeks its lodging
As star follows star
Into the blue far above us,
—So blue and so far!

It appears to me that the two long lines require a syllable each at the beginning, to keep the procession of sheep uninterrupted. The ear expects to read every long and short line, in the sequence of this metre, as one long line,—and where it cannot do so, a loss . . . an abruptness . . . is felt—and there should be nothing abrupt in the movement of these pastoral, starry images—do you think so? Is it not Goethe who compares the stars to sheep? Which you reverse here.

"Would we might help thee, my brother?

Why not, 'Oh, would,' &c.—it throws a wall into the line, and swells the rhythm rightly, I think.

"Next she whom we count
The beauty, the pride of our dwelling—

Why not 'For the beauty' or 'As the beauty'?

"But I stopped—for here, in the darkness
Saul groaned.

Very fine—and the preceding images full of beauty and characteristic life!—but in this long line, I just ask if the rhythm would gain by repeating 'here' . . . thus . . .

"But I stop here—for here in the darkness—
I just ask, being doubtful.

"And the shaking of the tent from the shudder of the king . . . what effect it all has!—and I like the jewels *waking* in his turban!

"So the head—but the body stirred not.

If you wrote 'So the head—but the body . . . *that* stirred not'—Just see the context.

"The water was wont to go warbling
Softly and well.

Is not a syllable wanted at the beginning of the short line, to make the water warble softly . . . 'right softly'?

"And heard her faint tongue
Join in, while it could, to the witness—

Would 'joining in' be better to the ear?

"And promise and wealth for the future
I think you meant to write 'the' before promise.

"All I said about the poem in my note, I think more and more. Full of power and beauty it is—and the conception, very striking.

"E. B. B."

That is one little batch of notes, one morning's work, it may be, of the invalid lying on her back on her couch, and writing in her tiny hand on tiny sheets of note-paper—for, as she said, she was a small woman, and liked to have small things about her. The reader who will take the pains to compare the criticisms with the poem as it stands to-day (remembering that, in its original form it was printed in alternate long and short lines, in place of the uniform long lines to which we are accustomed) will see that in almost every case Browning had the wisdom to accept his critic's suggestions. It was the most useful form of criticism—accepting and admiring the general conception and treatment, but suggesting minor improvements in detail which could be adopted without difficulty. The criticism which begins by telling a poet to alter his whole method is rarely of any use.

It would be tedious to go through the other poems in detail. In the lyric poems Miss Barrett's criticisms are mostly directed to improvements in rhythm and the removal of small obscurities. In "Luria," on the other hand, she did good service by discouraging a trick of inversion, and pointing out the greater force given by directness. No one who knows this noble poem will question the inferiority of the first form of these lines (Act I, ll. 139-142)—

If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Before the statist's hand should sink its point,
And to the calm head yield the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away . . .

to the simple, directer form in which they now stand. "Tell me if an air of stiffness is not given by such unnecessary inversions," says the critic in another instance; and again, when she has set straight another contorted phrase, "You allow the reader to see at a glance what otherwise he will seek studiously." This is a pregnant phrase, which Browning in later years might have done well to bear in mind. Not that the want of directness in some of the later poems, as compared with these of the Italian period, is to be attributed to the loss of his wife's correcting hand; for we know that the married poets made a point of keeping their work independent and apart until it was ready for the press. Nevertheless, the lesson indicated by these few criticisms seems to have borne fruit in the greater

clarity of the poems published between 1845 and 1864 ("Dramatis Personæ"), and was not always forgotten afterwards.

A few more general expressions of opinion may be quoted in conclusion. Of "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis," that delightful story of vengeance on a pedant, Miss Barrett writes:

Do you know that this poem is a great favourite with me—it is so new, and full of a creeping, crawling, grotesque life. Ah, but . . . do you know, besides, it is almost reproachable in you to hold up John Knox to derision in this way!

Of "The Tomb of St. Praxed's" (as the poem was originally called, of which Ruskin said that he knew no other piece of modern English in which there is so much told of the Renaissance spirit):

This is a wonderful poem, I think, and classes with those works of yours which show most power . . . most unquestionable genius in the high sense. You force your reader to sympathise positively in his glory in being buried.

She notices also "the rushing and hurrying life of the descriptions" in "England in Italy" (with its alternative title "Autumn at Sorrento"), "tossed in one upon another like the grape bunches in the early part, and not kept under by ever so much breathless effort on the poet's part," and adds "For giving the *sense of Italy*, it is worth a whole library of travel-books." Of the companion poem, "Italy in England," which Mazzini read to his fellow-exiles as a proof that at least one Englishman sympathised with them, she says: "I like the simplicity of the great-heartedness of it (though perhaps half-Saxon in character), with the Italian scenery all around—it is very impressive."

It is not always easy for the first critic of a new poem (and Browning's were so new that nothing like them, except the "Dramatic Lyrics" in Part III of the "Bells and Pomegranates," had ever appeared in English literature) to hit on just the features to which its ultimate reputation is due; but Miss Barrett does so again and again with unerring touch. Of "Pictor Ignotus" she says: "This poem is so fine, so full of power, as to claim every possible attention to the working of it: it begins greatly, grandly, and ends so,—the winding up winds up the soul of it. The versification too is noble. . . . I cannot tell you how much it impresses me." And she appreciates fully the verve and vigour of the great ride from Ghent to Aix:

You have the very trampling and breathing of the horses all through—and the sentiment is left in its right place, through all the physical force and display. . . . I know you

must be proud of the poem, and nobody can forget it who has looked at it once. . . . By the way, how the "galloping" is a good galloping word! And how you felt it, and took the effect up and dilated it by repeating it over and over in your first stanza . . . doubling, finding one upon another, the hoof-treads.

The textual criticism of Browning cannot have quite the same value as that of an artist in words, such as Tennyson, the lessons of whose fastidious taste are so well brought out in his son's biography. Nevertheless there is interest in tracing the development of his power of self-expression from the turbid waters of "Pauline" and the tangled thickets of "Sordello" up to the supreme mastery of thought and phrase which marks the fifty "Men and Women" of 1855, and which endured through the finest poems of "Dramatis Personæ" to the best books of "The Ring and the Book." And in the fragments of the story which have here been offered to the sympathetic reader there is the further interest that they form an episode in the beautiful idyll of the love of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning.

NEW POEMS

BY ROBERT BROWNING

THE FIRST-BORN OF EGYPT

[Robert Browning destroyed much of his very early work; this poem and the one that follows it are the only surviving examples. They were written in his fourteenth year, and we are indebted for their preservation to Miss Sarah Flower (afterwards Mrs. Adams, author of "Nearer, my God, to Thee"), who copied out the two poems in a letter addressed to William Johnson Fox in 1827 (see p. 1330). This letter was brought to light at the sale of the Browning Collections in 1913, being purchased with other papers by Mr. Bertram Dobell. Both the writer of the letter and its recipient were friends of the youthful poet. The poems were first printed, in an article by Mr. Bertram Dobell, in the *Cornhill Magazine* for January, 1914.]

THAT night came on in Egypt with a step
So calmly stealing in the gorgeous train
Of sunset glories flooding the pale clouds
With liquid gold, until at length the glow
Sank to its shadowy impulse and soft sleep
Bent o'er the world to curtain it from life—

Vitality was hushed beneath her wing—
Pomp sought his couch of purple—care-worn
grief

Flung slumber's mantle o'er him. At that
hour

He in whose brain the burning fever fiend
Held revelry—his hot cheek turn'd awhile
Upon the cooler pillow. In his cell
The captive wrapped him in his squalid rags,
And sank amid his straw. Circean sleep!
Bathed in thine opiate dew false hope vacates
Her seat in the sick soul, leaving awhile
Her dreamy fond imaginings—pale fear
His wild misgivings, and the warm life-
springs
Flow in their wonted channels—and the
train—
The harpy train of care forsakes the heart. 20

Was it the passing sigh of the night wind
Or some lorn spirit's wail—that moaning cry
That struck the ear? 'tis hushed—no! it
swells on
On—as the thunder peal when it essays
To wreck the summer sky—that fearful
shriek
Still it increases—'tis the dolorous plaint,
The death cry of a nation—

It was a fearful thing—that hour of night.
I have seen many climes, but that dread hour
Hath left its burning impress on my soul 30
Never to be erased. Not the loud crash
When the shuddering forest swings to the red
bolt

Or march of the fell earthquake when it
whelms

A city in its yawning gulf, could quell
That deep voice of despair. Pharaoh arose
Startled from slumber, and in anger sought
The reason of the mighty rushing throng
At that dark hour around the palace gates,
—And then he dashed his golden crown away
And tore his hair in frenzy when he knew 40
That Egypt's heir was dead—From every
home,

The marbled mansion of regality.
To the damp dungeon's walls—gay pleasure's
seat

And poverty's lone hut, that cry was heard
As guided by the Seraph's vengeful arm
The hand of death held on its withering
course,

Blighting the hopes of thousands.—

I sought the street to gaze upon the grief
Of congregated Egypt—there the slave
Stood by him late his master, for that hour 50
Made vain the world's distinctions—for
could wealth

Or power arrest the woe?—Some were there
As sculptured marble from the quarry late
Of whom the foot first in the floating dance,
The glowing cheek hued with the deep'ning
flush

In the night revel—told the young and gay.
No kindly moisture dewed their stony eye.

Or damp'd their ghastly glare—for they felt
not.

The chain of torpor bound around the heart
Had stifled it for ever. Tears stole down
The furrow'd channels of those withered
cheeks

Whose fount had long been chill'd, but that
night's term

Had loosed the springs—for 'twas a fearful
thing

To see a nation's hope so blasted. One
Press'd his dead child unto his heart—no spot
Of livid plague was nigh—no purple cloud

10 Of scathing fever—and he struck his brow
To rouse himself from that wild phantasy
Deeming it but a vision of the night.

*I marked one old man with his only son
Lifeless within his arms—his withered hand
Wandering o'er the features of his child
Bidding him [wake] from that long dreary sleep,
And lead his old blind father from the crowd
To the green meadows* ¹—but he answer'd not;

And then the terrible truth flash'd on his
brain,

20 And when the throng roll'd on some bade him
rise

And cung not so unto the dead one there,
Nor voice nor look made answer—he was
gone.

But one thought chain'd the powers of each
mind

Amid that night's felt horror—each one owned
In silence the dread majesty—the might
Of Israel's God, whose red hand had avenged
His servants' cause so fearfully.

THE DANCE OF DEATH

And as they footed it around,
They sang their triumphs o'er mankind!
de Stael.

FEVER

30 Bow to me, bow to me;
Follow me in my burning breath,
Which brings as the simoom destruction and
death.

My spirit lives in the hectic glow
When I bid the life streams tainted flow
In the fervid sun's deep brooding beam
When seething vapours in volumes steam,
And they fall—the young, the gay—as the
flower

'Neath the fiery wind's destructive power.
This day I have gotten a noble prize—

40 There was one who saw the morning rise,

¹ It is to be presumed that these lines were
thus italicised by Miss Flower because she
wished to draw Mr. Fox's attention to them
as being particularly good.

And watch'd fair Cynthia's golden streak
Kiss the misty mountain peak,
But I was there, and my poisonous flood
Envenom'd the gush of the youth's warm
blood.

They hastily bore him to his bed,
But o'er him death his swart pennons spread:
The skilled leech's art was vain,
Delirium revelled in each vein.
I mark'd each deathly change in him;
I watch'd his lustrous eye grow dim,
The purple cloud on his deep swol'n brow,
The gathering death sweat's chilly flow,
The dull dense film obscure the eye,
Heard the last quick gasp and saw him die.

PESTILENCE

My spirit has past on the lightning's wing
O'er city and land with its withering;
In the crowded street, in the flashing hall
My tramp has been heard: they are lonely all.
A nation has swept at my summons away
As mists before the glare of day.

See how proudly reigns my hand
In the black'ning heaps on the surf-beat strand
[Where]² the rank grass grows in deserted
streets

[Where] the terrified stranger no passer meets
[And all] around the putrid air
[Glams] lurid and red in Erin's stare
Where silence reigns, where late swell'd the
lute,

Thrilling lyre, mellifluous flute.
There if my prowess ye would know
Seek ye—and bow to your rival low.

AGUE

Bow to me, bow to me;
My influence is in the freezing deeps
Where the icy power of torpor sleeps,
Where the frigid waters flow
My marble chair is more cold below;
When the Grecian brav'd the Hellespont's
flood

How did I curdle his fever'd blood,
And sent his love in tumescent wave
To meet with her lover an early grave.
When Hellas' victor sought the rush
Of the river to lave in its cooling gush,
Did he not feel my iron clutch
When he fainted and sank at my algid touch?
These are the least of the trophies I claim—
Bow to me then, and own my fame.

MADNESS

Hear ye not the gloomy yelling
Or the tide of anguish swelling,
Hear ye the clank of fetter and chain,
Hear ye the wild cry of grief and pain,

² Paper removed where sealed.

Followed by the shuddering laugh.
 As when fiends the life blood quaff?
 See! see that hand,
 See how their bursting eyeballs gleam,
 As the tiger's when crouched in the jungle's
 lair,
 In India's sultry land.
 Now they are seized in the rabies fell,
 Hark! 'tis a shriek as from fiends of hell;
 Now there is a plaining moan,
 As the flow of the sullen river—
 List! there is a hollow groan.
 Doth it not make e'en *you* to shiver—
 These are they struck of the barbs of my
 quiver.
 Slaves before my haughty throne,
 Bow then, bow to me alone.

CONSUMPTION

'Tis for me, 'tis for me;
 Mine the prize of Death must be;
 My spirit is o'er the young and gay
 As on snowy wreaths in the bright noonday
 They wear a melting and vermeille flush
 E'en while I bid their pulses hush,
 Hueing o'er their dying brow
 With the spring (?) of health's best roseate
 glow
 When the lover watches the full dark eye
 Robed in tints of ianthine dye,
 Beaming eloquent as to declare
 The passions that deepen the glories there.
 The frost in its tide of dazzling whiteness,
 As Juno's brow of crystal brightness,
 Such as the Grecian's hand could give
 When he bade the sculptured marble "live,"
 The ruby suffusing the Hebe cheek,
 The pulses that love and pleasure speak
 Can his fond heart claim but another day,
 And the loathsome worm on her form shall
 prey.
 She is scathed as the tender flower,
 When mildews o'er its chalice lour.
 Tell me not of her balmy breath,
 Its tide shall be shut in the fold of death;
 Tell me not of her honied lip,
 The reptile's fangs shall its fragrance sip.
 Then will I say triumphantly
 Bow to the deadliest—bow to me!

THE EARLIEST POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

WHEN I was writing my "Sidelights on Charles Lamb," I happened in the course of my search for materials to look through the volume of *The Monthly Repository* for 1835. Therein I found, with other matter on my subject, an article entitled "An Evening with Charles Lamb and Coleridge," over the signature "S. Y." I found this so interesting from its vivid and sympathetic sketches of the two authors that I searched the volume

for other writings with the same signature. I found that "S. Y." was a frequent contributor of verse and prose to the magazine. In all these contributions I recognized the work of a mind "touched to fine issues," and I became very curious as to the personality hidden behind the mask "S. Y." I felt assured the writer could not be altogether unknown to fame; but I could find no clue that would connect him—or her—with any known author. I was particularly struck with the excellence of the various poems by "S. Y.," and when I printed "An Evening with Charles Lamb and Coleridge" in my book, I printed also a poem "Morning, Noon, and Night" which I then thought—and still think—worthy of being included in any anthology of English verse.¹

Some time after the publication of my book I was informed—I cannot now remember by whom—that "S. Y." stood for "Sally," the usual signature in letters to friends and relatives of Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams, well known as the author of what is now, perhaps, the most popular hymn in our language, "Nearer, my God, to Thee"; but otherwise, save to a very few, practically unknown. The fame she has hitherto enjoyed, despite its narrow limits, has yet been of a not unenviable kind; for it would be impossible to name any poem, not of a religious character, which is so often in the minds and on the lips of humanity as the hymn which I have mentioned. It is one which, like Newman's "Lead, kindly Light," can never fall into disuse; since its appeal is universal and does not depend upon any doctrine which may not be subscribed to by the members of any church or creed.

Eliza and Sarah Flower were the daughters of Benjamin Flower, a printer, and a man of liberal opinions, at a time when the open avowal of such opinions was extremely likely to lead to unpleasant consequences. He was the publisher of *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, in which paper some of Coleridge's poems first appeared, and to which, when he discontinued his *Watchman*, the poet recommended his readers to subscribe. Some disrespectful remarks, which were printed in the paper, upon Bishop Watson, then famous as the Church's champion against Paine's *Age of Reason*, were construed as a breach of the privileges of the House of Lords, and the unfortunate publisher was condemned to six months' imprisonment and a fine of a hundred pounds. Yet this seeming misfortune was, it appears, something like a blessing in disguise. Eliza Gould, a Devon schoolmistress, and a reader of *The Intelligencer*, found herself compelled

¹ It has found its way into at least one anthology.

to choose between giving up her school or giving up her newspaper. She was a woman of spirit, and chose rather to sacrifice her school than her liberal opinions. She visited Flower in prison, with the result that a mutual affection sprang up between them; and this led, on his release, to their marriage. She became in 1803 the mother of Eliza, and in 1805 of Sarah Flower. Like her daughters, she was destined to an early death: she passed away in 1810.

The Flower sisters, it appears, had become acquainted with the Browning family through a mutual friend, a Miss Sturtevant. This happened in 1827, or it may be a year or so earlier. Robert Browning was then between fourteen and fifteen years of age; and the sisters, naturally enough, took much interest in the "boy Genius." He had already written a "book full" of verse, which he had entitled "Incondita," and which he was "mad to publish." His mother showed this book to the sisters; and Eliza Flower, it is said, admired the book so much that she copied out the whole of it. But perhaps I had better quote from Mrs. Orr's *Life of Browning* her account of this matter:

The young author gave his work the title of "Incondita," which conveyed a certain idea of depreciation. He was, nevertheless, very anxious to see it in print; and his father and mother, poetry lovers of the old school, also found in it sufficient merit to justify its publication. No publisher, however, could be found; and we can easily believe that he soon afterwards destroyed the little manuscript, in some mingled reaction of disappointment and disgust. But his mother, meanwhile, had shown it to an acquaintance of hers, Miss Flower, who herself admired its contents so much as to make a copy of them for the inspection of her friend, the well-known Unitarian minister, Mr. W. J. Fox. The copy was transmitted to Mr. Browning after Fox's death, by his daughter, Mrs. Bridell Fox; and this, if no other, was in existence in 1871, when, at his urgent request, that lady also returned to him a fragment of verse contained in a letter from Miss Sarah Flower. Nor was it till much later that a friend, who had earnestly begged for a sight of it, definitely heard of its destruction. The fragment, which doubtless shared the same fate, was, I am told, a direct imitation of Coleridge's "Fire, Famine and Slaughter."

Mrs. Orr wrote the above from the best information then available; but her statement can now be amplified. It may be true that Eliza Flower copied out the whole of the "Incondita" volume for Mr. Fox's inspection; but it is certain that it was not she,

but her sister, who first introduced the poems—or at least two of them—to Mr. Fox's notice. We shall see, too, that the letter of Sarah Flower is, fortunately, still in existence, and that it contains, not "a fragment of verse," but two complete poems, of quite sufficient length to show of what the young poet was then capable. Nor is the fragment spoken of a direct imitation of Coleridge's "Fire, Famine and Slaughter." It may have been suggested by it; but it cannot fairly be called a mere imitation.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM SARAH FLOWER (AFTERWARDS MRS. ADAMS, AUTHOR OF "NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE") TO WILLIAM JOHNSON FOX.

DALSTON

May 31st (1827).

"What in the name of fortune is the girl going to do with this tremendous sheet of paper?" Now dread the worst my dear Mr. Fox but suspend your judgment one minute—now in reward you shall hear what a delicious treat you may expect when you have turned over a new leaf. Now do not peep. Yes you may just take one, only one. I do most positively forbid your reading that Genius's poetry tho' I grant it looks very tempting until you have waded thro' the prosy part. No! No! I am quite too cunning for that. So now having done as they do with children (—there—take your physic there's a good child and then you shall have something Oh so nice afterwards), shall I tell you whose *mine* these gems come from?—and yet I wish they were *mine* with all my soul—and I'm sure it would be worth all *my* soul if they were—"Bah"—forgive me and if you knew what a bad muddling cold I have had you would—They are "the boy" Browning's *at. 14*—and so they as well as he can speak for themselves.

I do not know of any equally promising work by one who was no older than Browning at the time these poems were written; unless indeed it was that of his future wife, whose epic of "The Battle of Marathon" was a still more juvenile production. Shelley, at about the same age, was still in his witch, hobgoblin, and Minerva Press period, and had written nothing but wild and incoherent rhapsodies from which no favourable forecast of his future achievements could possibly have been derived. The feeling we should have for his early writings would be something like contempt, if we did not know that they were the necessary prelude to "The Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound." But we can have no such feeling about "The First-born of Egypt," or "The Dance of Death." Faulty they may be, but there is

evidence enough in them that their author had within him the elements from which so many and such vigorous creations were to spring. And those who will take the trouble to search for them will, I am sure, discover in the later work of the poet a good many parallels to lines or passages in these early efforts.

Six months after writing the letter printed above Sarah Flower wrote another, of a very different character, to Mr. Fox.¹ There is one passage in the letter which must be quoted here. She writes to Mr. Fox to tell him that she has recently become very unhappy because she had begun to entertain doubts about the creed in which she has been brought up, and in which she had hitherto believed. She goes on to say:

My mind has been wandering a long time, and now it seems to have lost sight of that only invulnerable hold against the assaults of this warring world, a firm belief in the genuineness of the Scriptures. . . . The cloud has come over me gradually, and I did not discover the darkness in which my soul was shrouded until, in seeking to give light to others, my own gloomy state became too settled to admit of doubt. It was in answering Robert Browning that my mind refused to bring forward argument, turned recreant and sided with the enemy.

It is, of course, because of its reference to Robert Browning that I have quoted the above passage. The young poet was then very much like what Shelley had been at his age, a very pronounced freethinker, and one who was eager to make converts to his own way of thing. And it was, I believe, Shelley's "Queen Mab" which was responsible for Browning's scepticism. This mood had passed away, it seems, before the publication of "Pauline," in which the poet expresses his repentance for his youthful errors.

BERTRAM DOBELL.

SONNET

[This sonnet is interesting from its early date, and from its being the first of Browning's rare contributions to periodical literature. It was published in Mr. W. J. Fox's magazine, *The Monthly Repository*, in October 1834, and bears the date of August 17 in that year, with the signature "Z." Browning's subsequent contributions to this magazine (all with the same signature) were the

¹This is printed in full in Mr. Conway's *Centenary of the South Place Society*, where (the book being, I believe, still in print) those whom this article may have interested in Sarah Flower may read it.

song "A King lived long ago" (afterwards incorporated in "Pippa Passes"), "Porphyria," "Johannes Agricola," and the lines, "Still ailing, wind," which reappeared in 1864 in "James Lee's Wife."

The present sonnet has been reprinted in Edmund Gosse's *Personalia* (1890, pp. 34-35); in the Browning Society's *Papers*, Part XII.; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 469; in Hall (Griffin and Minchin's *Life of Browning* (1910), p. 306; in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 11; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works (1912), vol. iii., p. 417. The circumstances of its composition are not known.]

Eyes calm beside thee (Lady, could'st thou know!)

May turn away thick with fast-gathering tears:

I glance not where all gaze: thrilling and low

Their passionate praises reach thee—my cheek wears

Alone no wonder when thou passest by;

Thy tremulous lids bent and suffused reply

To the irrepressible homage which doth glow

On every lip but mine: if in thine ears

Their accents linger—and thou dost recall

Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,

Beside each votarist whose lighted brow

Wore worship like an aureole, "O'er them all

My beauty," thou wilt murmur, "did prevail

Save that one only":—Lady, could'st thou know!

Aug. 17, 1834.

A FOREST THOUGHT²

[This early and attractive poem was written on November 4, 1837, on the occasion of Browning standing godfather to the eldest son of his friend William Alexander Dow. He was asked to write something in an album after the christening, and these lines were produced on the spot. The album is still preserved in the family of the poet's friend, but the poem never appeared in print until 1905, when it was published in the periodical *Country Life* (June 10). It was reprinted in *Robert Browning and Alfred Dowell*, 1906, p. xi.; in Hall (Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, p. 305; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. iii., pp. 418-9.

The opening lines are a reminiscence of Browning's visit to Russia in the winter of 1833-4.]

IN far Esthonian solitudes

The parent-firs of future woods

² "Written and inscribed to W. A. and A. D. by their Sincere Friend, Robert Browning, 13 Nelson Sq., November 4, 1837."

Gracefully, airily spire at first
 Up to the sky, by the soft sand nurst;
 Self-sufficient are they, and strong
 With outspread arms, broad, level and long;
 But soon in the sunshine and the storm
 They darken, changing fast their form—
 Low boughs fall off, and in the bole
 Each tree spends all its strenuous soul—
 Till the builder gazes wistfully
 So Such noble ship-mast wood to see,
 And cares not for its soherer hue,
 Its rougher bark and leaves more few.

But just when beauty passes away
 And you half regret it could not stay,
 For all their sap and vigorous life,—
 Under the shade, secured from strife
 A seedling springs—the forest-tree
 In miniature, and again we see
 The delicate leaves that will fade one day,
 So The fan-like shoots that will drop away,
 The taper stem a breath could strain—
 Which shall foil one day the hurricane:
 We turn from this infant of the copse
 To the parent-firs,—in their waving tops
 To find some trace of the light green tuft
 A breath could stir,—in the bole aloft
 Column-like set against the sky,
 The spire that flourished airily
 And the marten bent as she rustled by.

So So shall it be, dear Friends, when days
 Pass, and in this fair child we trace
 Goodness, full-formed in you, tho' dim
 Faint-budding, just astir in him:
 When rudiments of generous worth
 And frankest love in him have birth,
 We'll turn to love and worth full-grown,
 And learn their fortune from your own.
 Nor shall we vainly search to see
 His gentleness—simplicity—
 So Not lost in your maturer grace—
 Perfected, but not changing place.

May this grove be a charmed retreat . . .
 May northern winds and savage sleet
 Leave the good trees untouched, unshorn,
 A crowning pride of woods unborn:
 And gracefully beneath their shield
 May the seedling grow! All pleasures yield
 Peace below and peace above,
 The glancing squirrels' summer love,
 So And the brood-song of the cushat-dove!

THE "MOSES" OF MICHAEL ANGELO

[The MS. of this sonnet by Robert Browning, which he gave to his wife at the time it was written, was discovered lately among some papers of the late Mr. George Smith, his publisher and friend. It is a translation of a sonnet by G. B. F. Zappi, which may be found in A. Rubbi's *Parnaso Italiano*, 1789,

tom. 42, p. 162. It was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* for September 1914.]

AND who is He that, sculptured in huge stone,
 Sitteth a giant, where no works arrive
 Of straining Art, and hath so prompt and
 live

The lips, I listen to their very tone?
 Moses is He—Ay, that, makes clearly known
 The chin's thick boast, and brow's preroga-
 tive

Of double ray: so did the mountain give
 Back to the world that visage, God was grown
 Great part of! Such was he when he sus-
 pended

Round him the sounding and vast waters; 6
 such

When he shut sea on sea o'er Mizraim.
 And ye, his hordes, a vile calf raised, and
 bended

The knee? This Image had ye raised, not
 much

Had been your error in adoring Him.

From Zappi, R. B. (Given to Ba "for
 love's sake," Siena. Sept. 27, '50.)

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

[This poem, like the last, belongs to the Italian period of Browning's life. It appeared in *The Keepsake* for 1856, with the date, Rome, April 27, 1854, but was not reprinted until it appeared in the first part of the Browning Society's *Papers* in 1881. It has since been reprinted in Mr. W. G. Kingsland's *Robert Browning, Chief Poet of the Age*, 1890, p. 26; in Mr. W. Sharp's *Life of Browning*, 1890, p. 167; in Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1891 (p. 198 of the edition of 1906); in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes*, 1895, p. 450; in Hall Griffin and Minchin's *Life*, p. 307; in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 372; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. iii., p. 420.

In the poem, "One Word More," which forms the epilogue to the "Men and Women" of 1855, occurred (in the original edition, and in the *Poetical Works* of 1863 and 1868) the line "Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty." This, however, was a slip of the pen. "Karshook" cannot have formed one of the fifty when the epilogue was written, less than two months before the publication of the volumes; and in 1881, in reply to an inquiry from Dr. Furnivall, Browning wrote as follows: "*Karshish* is the proper word, referring as it does to him of the 'Epistle.' *Karshook* (Heb.: a Thistle) just belongs to the snarling verses I remember to have written, but forget for whom; the other was the only one of the Fifty" (Wise, *Letters of Robert Browning*, i., 71). The correction appeared in the Tauchnitz edition of 1872, and

in subsequent English editions (certainly from 1879 onwards).]

I

"Would a man 'scape the rod?"
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
"See that he turn to God
"The day before his death."

"Ay, could a man inquire
"When it shall come!" I say.
The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—
"Then let him turn to-day!"

II

Quoth a young Sadducee:
"Reader of many rolls,
"Is it so certain we
"Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"
The Rabbi bit his beard;
"Certain, a soul have I—
"We may have none," he sneer'd.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
The Right-hand Temple-column,
Taught babes in grace their grammar,
And struck the simple, solemn.
ROME, April 27, 1854.

ON BEING DEFIED TO EXPRESS IN A HEXAMETER: "YOU OUGHT TO SIT ON THE SAFETY-VALVE"

The MS. of these Latin hexameters was discovered lately among some papers of the late Mr. George Smith, preserved at Waterloo Place. They were first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* for September 1914.]

PLANE te valvâ fas est pressisse salutis:
Æquum est te valvâque, salutis sede, locari:
Convenit in sellâ, valvâ residere salutis,
Omninoque salutis par considere valvâ:
Sedibus est justum valvâ mansisse salutis:
Hâsisse in valvâ te, sede salutis, oportet:
Est tibi valvis, inque salutis sede, sedendum:
Valvâ, sede salutiferâ super, assidet omnis
Qui discrimen adit, fortem quem numina serv-
ant:
Multiplicem versum tu mente, Robertule,
hâgas:
Feb. 22, '66.

LINES TO THE MEMORY OF HIS PAR- ENTS (1866)

[These lines by Robert Browning, addressed apparently to the memory of his parents—from a MS. in the handwriting of Miss Brown-

ing—were among the papers disposed of at the Browning Sale in May 1913. They were probably written in 1866, the year of his father's death. They were first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine*, February 1914.]

"WORDS I might else have been compelled to
say
In silence to my heart—great love, great
praise
Of thee, my Father—have been freely said
By those whom none shall blame; and while
thy life
Endures, a beauteous thing, in their record
I may desire, that thou wert oft and often
They lie beside thee whom thou lovest most;
Soft sanctuary-tapers of thy house,
Close-curtained when the Priest came forth,—
on these
Let peace be, peace on thee, my Mother, too!
The child that never knew you, and the Girl
In whom your gentle souls seemed born again
To bless us longer. Peace like yours be mine
Till the same quiet home receive us all."

A ROUND ROBIN

(Written by Robert Browning and sent to
Miss Harriet Hosmer in Rome)

[Browning and his sister were staying in Scotland with Lady Ashburton; other members of the party were the Storys, Lady Marian Alford, and Sir Roderick Murchison. Miss Harriet Hosmer, an American sculptress of considerable repute, with a studio in Rome, had associated with the Brownings both in Florence and in Rome. The lines were first printed in *Harriet Hosmer, Letters and Memories*, edited by Cornelia Carr (John Lane, 1913), pp. 275-6.]

Loch Luichart, Dingwall, N. B.

DEAR HOSMER; or still dearer, Hasty—
Mixture of *miele* and of *latte*,
So good and sweet and—somewhat fatty—

Why linger still in Rome's old glory
When Scotland lies in cool before ye?
Make haste and come!—quoth Mr. Story. 50

Sculpture is not a thing to sit to
In summertime; do find a fit toe
To kick the clay aside a bit—oh,
Yield to our prayers! quoth Mrs. Ditto.

Give comfort to us poor and needy
Who, wanting you, are waiting greedy
Our meat and drink, yourself, quoth Edie.
Nay, though, past clay, you chip the Parian,
Throw chisel down! quoth Lady Marian.

Be welcome, as to cow—the fodder rick!
Excuse the simile!—quoth Sir Roderick.

Say not (in Scotch) "in troth it canna be"—
But, honey, milk and, indeed, manna bel
Forgive a stranger!—Sarianna B.

Don't set an old acquaintance frowning,
But come and quickly! quoth R. Browning,
For since prodigious fault is found with you,
I—that is, Robin—must be Round with you.

PS. Do wash your hands, or leave the dirt on,
But leave the tool as Gammer Gurton

Her needle lost,—Lady Ashburton.
Thus ends this letter—ease my sick heart,
And come to my divine Loch Lulchart!

W. W. STORY, his mark X,
EMELYN STORY,
EDITH MARION STORY,

Signatures of: In M. ALFORD,
order of infraposition, I am, RODERICK MURCHISON,
SARIANNA BROWNING,
ROBERT BROWNING,

Sept. 5, 1869. L. ASHBURTON.

HELEN'S TOWER

(Written at the request of the Marquis
Dufferin)

[This sonnet was written as far back as 1870, but was not published until it appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on December 28, 1883. It was written at the invitation of Lord Dufferin, for the tower which he built at Clondeboye in memory of his mother, Helen, Countess of Gifford, and bears the date of April 26, 1870. Tennyson's lines on the same occasion are printed in his *Tiresias and other Poems* (1885). It is strange that Browning should not have included so fine a poem in any of his subsequent volumes.]

It was reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 601; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. ix., p. 348.]

Who hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance

How the Greek beauty from the Scaean gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise at thy advance,
Lady, to whom this tower is consecrate!

Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
20 Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.
The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange:

A transitory shame of long ago,
It dies into the sand from which it sprang;
But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear
no change:

God's self laid stable earth's foundations so,

When all the morning stars together sang.
April 26, 1870.

"OH LOVE, LOVE"

[The following lines are a translation of Euripides' "Hippolytus," ll. 525-544, and were contributed by Browning to a little handbook on the Greek poet by Professor J. P. Mahaffy, in 1870. They have been reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1881, Pt. I., p. 69; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 874; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. ix., p. 345.]

Oh Love, Love, thou that from the eyes dif-
fusest

Yearning, and on the soul sweet grace in-
ducest—

Souls against whom thy hostile march is
made—

Never to me be manifest in ire,
Nor, out of time and tune, my peace invade!

Since neither from the fire—

No, nor the stars—is launched a bolt more
mighty

Than that of Aphrodité

Hurled from the hands of Love, the boy with
Zeus for sire.

Idly, how idly, by the Alpheian river
And in the Pythian shrines of Phœbus, quiver
Blood-offerings from the bull, which Hellas
heaps:

While Love we worship not—the Lord of men!
Worship not him, the very key who keeps 40
Of Aphrodité, when

She closes up her dearest chamber-portals:

—Love, when he comes to mortals,

Wide-wasting, through those deeps of woes
beyond the deep.

VERSES FROM "THE HOUR WILL COME"

[These lines are a translation of a poem in a German tale entitled "The Hour will Come," by Wilhelmine von Hillern. An English version of it was made by Miss Clara Bell, which appeared in 1879; and for this Browning's lines were written. His name was not attached to the translation, but acknowledgments are made "to the kindness of a friend."] 30

The poem has been reprinted in the *Whitehall Review*, March 1, 1883; in the Browning Society's *Papers*; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 910, and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. ix., p. 346.]

The blind man to the maiden said,
 "O thou of hearts the truest,
 Thy countenance is hid from me;
 Let not my question anger thee!
 Speak, though in words the fewest.

"Tell me, what kind of eyes are thine?
 Dark eyes, or light ones rather?"
 "My eyes are a decided brown—
 So much at least, by looking down,
 From the brook's glass I gather."

"And is it red—thy little mouth?
 That too the blind must care for."
 "Ah! I would tell it soon to thee,
 Only—none yet has told it me,
 I cannot answer, therefore.

"But dost thou ask what heart I have—
 There hesitate I never.
 In thine own breast 'tis borne, and so
 'Tis thine in weal, and thine in woe,
 For life, for death—thine ever!"

TRANSLATION FROM PINDAR'S SEVENTH OLYMPIAN, EPODE III

[The following draft letter and poem, found among the poet's papers, were sold with the Browning Collections in 1913. Although addressed to the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the letter appears not to have been sent; in any case, a search through the file of the paper about that time does not reveal its publication. In December of the same year, however, the editor printed no less than three poems by Browning: the sonnet on "Goldoni," some lines from Horace ("On Singers"), and the important poem "Helen's Tower," all given in this volume. This is one of many instances showing that the poet loved to exercise his masterly knowledge of the classics. The occasion was an incident in the celebrated trial "Belt v. Lawes," when the Judge, on the strength of a passage in Aristotle, intimated that a Middlesex jury was as good a judge of Art as a Royal Academician.]

(19 Warwick Crescent, W.)
 Jan. 14, '83.

LETTER TO "PALL MALL GAZETTE."

SIR,—We have recently been favoured with a Greek quotation,—warranted however rather by the bench than the Book—

{	case	}
{	shelf	}

—on the subject of Art. Another one, as apposite, might be made from another old authority; and, curiously enough, it immediately precedes the passage which was illustrated, some years ago, by one of the finest pictures of the President. For the general reader, I venture a rough version: the Middlesex Jury needs no reminding that

the original occurs in Pindar's Seventh Olympian, Epode III.

I am, Sir, Yours obediently,
 R. B.

The Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*

AND to these Rhodians she, the sharp eyed one,

Gave the supremacy, in every art,—
 And, nobly labouring play the craftsman's part

Beyond all dwellers underneath the sun.
 So that the very ways by which ye pass
 Bore sculpture, living things that walk or creep

Like as the life: whence very high and deep
 Indeed the glory of the artist was.

For, in the well-instructed artist, skill,
 However great, receives our greeting,
 As something greater still,
 When unaccompanied by cheating.

SONNET TO RAWDON BROWN

[Rawdon Brown was, as indicated in this sonnet, an Englishman. Visiting Venice temporarily, he remained for forty years, and died there in 1883. He is mentioned in travel books as having a very perfect knowledge of the city. Toni was his gondolier. The epitaph on his tomb is taken from the third and fourth lines. The sonnet was first printed in the *Century Magazine*, February, 1884, vol. xxvii., p. 640; being reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1884, Pt. V., p. 132; and in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition of the Poet's Works (1895), p. 947.]

SIGHED Rawdon Brown: "Yes, I'm departing,
 Toni!

I needs must, just this once before I die,
 Revisit England: *Anglus* Brown am I,
 Although my heart's Venetian. Yes, old
 crony—

Venice and London—London's "Death the
 bony"

Compared with Life—that's Venice! What
 a sky,

A sea, this morning! One last look! Good-by,
 Cà Pesaro! No lion—I'm a coney
 To weep! I'm dazzled; 'tis that sun I view
 Rippling the . . . the . . . *Cospello*, Toni!

Down

With carpet-bag, and off with valise-straps!
Bella Venezia, non ti lascio più!
 Nor did Brown ever leave her: well, perhaps
 Browning, next week, may find himself quite
 Brown!

Nov. 28, 1883.

GOLDONI

[The origin of the Goldoni sonnet is given by the poet himself in a letter to Dr Furni-

vall of December 3, 1883 (Wise, *Letters of R. Browning*, ii., 31):

"They are going to unveil and display here a monument erected to Goldoni, and the committee did me the honour to request a word or two for insertion in an Album to which the principal men of letters in Italy have contributed. I made a sonnet, which they please to think so well of that they preface the work with it."

Mrs. Bronson (*Cornhill Magazine*, February, 1902, p. 10) adds that the sonnet was written very rapidly, and only two or three trifling alterations were made in the original copy.

The sonnet was printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 8, 1883, and has since been reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1884, Pt. V., p. 99; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 910; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works, vol. ix., p. 347.]

GOLDONI—good, gay, sunniest of souls—

Glassing half Venice in that verse of thine—
What though it just reflect the shade and shine

Of common life, nor render, as it rolls,
Grandeur and gloom? Sufficient for thy shoals

Was Carnival: Parini's depths enshrine
Secrets unsuited to that opaline

Surface of things which laughs along thy scrolls.

There throng the people: how they come and go,

o Lisp the soft language, flaunt the bright garb—see—

On Piazza, Calle, under Portico

And over Bridge! Dear king of Comedy,
Be honoured! Thou that didst love Venice so,
Venice, and we who love her, all love thee.

ON SINGERS

[First printed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 13, 1883, and reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1884, Pt. V., p. 99. Robert Browning was asked to write in a lady's album, where he saw some one had written the lines from Horace:]

OMNIBUS hoc vitium est cantoribus, inter
amicos

Ut nunquam inducant animum cantare rogati,
Injussi nunquam desistant.

He immediately appended the following translation:

All singers, trust me, have this common vice,
To sing 'mid friends you'll have to ask them
twice.

If you don't ask them 'tis another thing,
Until the judgment-day be sure they'll sing.

GEROUSIOS OINOS

[This poem, which was put into type at the same time as the volume "Jocoseria" (1883), was not eventually published, but came to light in its present form as a rough printed proof in what is known as a "galley-slip" among the poet's papers offered at the sale of the Browning Collections in May 1913, and purchased by the well-known bibliophile, Mr. Bertram Dobell. It was first published in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Century Magazine*, April 1914.]

I DREAMED there was once held a feast:

That lords assembled, most and least,

And set them down to dine;

Till, eating ended—high of heart

Each guest,—the butler did his part,

Poured out their proper wine.

Good tippie and of various growth

(You may believe without an oath)

Glorified every glass:

All drank in honour of the host,

Then—high of heart,—rose least and most,

And left the room—alas.

For in rushed straightway loon and lout,

Mere servingmen who skulked without:

"Our masters turn their backs,

And now's the time to taste and try

What meat lords munch,—and, by and by,

What wine they swill—best smacks."

So said, so done: first, hunger spends

Its rage on victual, odds and ends:

But seeing that rage appeased,

"Now for the lords' wine," all agree,

"Kept from the like of you and me!

Wet whistles, chins once greased!

"How! not content with loading crop,
These lords have scarcely left a drop

In every glass deep-drained.

The niggards mean our feast to prove

A horse-regale! But, one remove

From wine is water stained.

"Fill up each glass with water! Get

Such flavour as may stick fast yet,

Fancy shall do the rest!

Besides we boast our private flasks,

Good stiff mundungus, home-brewed casks

Beating their bottled best!

"So here's your health to watered port!

Thanks: mine is sherry of a sort.

Claret, though thinnish, clear.

My Burgundy's the genuine stuff—

Bettered and bittered just enough

By mixing it with beer."

Oh, England (I awoke and laughed)
 True wine thy lordly Poets quaffed,
 Yet left,—for, what cared they!—
 Each glass its heel-tap—flavouring sup
 For funkeys when, to liquor up,
 In swarmed—who, need I say!

THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST

(To Arthur Chappell)

[In 1884 Browning contributed these lines to the Album presented to Mr. Arthur Chappell, the organiser of the Popular Concerts at St. James's Hall, thus testifying to his love of music and to his frequent attendance at concerts. The poem was printed in *The World* for April 16, 1884, and has been reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1884, Pt. VII., p. 18; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 947, and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works (1912), vol. ix., p. 349. It has hitherto contained fifteen lines, but the following version, reduced to the sonnet form of fourteen lines (by the deletion of line nine and the consequent revision of line ten), is printed from a cutting taken from the *World* and corrected by Browning, which was found among his papers.]

"ENTER my palace," if a prince should say—
 "Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,

'They range from Titian up to Angelo!"
 o Could we be silent at the rich survey?
 A host so kindly, in as great a way
 Invites to banquet, substitutes for show
 Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
 Bach like Beethoven; are we thankless, pray?
 To him whose every guest not idly vaunts,
 "Sense has received the utmost Nature
 grants,
 My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
 When, night by night—ah, memory, how
 it haunts!—
 Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
 20 By Halle, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim."
 April 5, 1884.

THE NAMES

(To Shakespeare)

[Written for the *Shakespearean Show-Book* published in May 1884, in connection with the Shakespearean Show held at the Albert Hall in aid of the Hospital for Women in the Fulham Road. It was reprinted in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for May 29; in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1884, Pt. V., p. 105; in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the*

Nineteenth Century, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 947; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works (1912), vol. ix., p. 350.]

SHAKESPEARE!—to such name's sounding
 what succeeds

Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell,—
 Act follows word, the speaker knows full
 well,

Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
 Two names there are: That which the Hebrew
 reads

With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
 Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven
 and hell,

Would own "Thou did'st create us!" Nought
 impedes

We voice the other name, man's most of
 might,

Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love 30
 Mutely await their working, leave to sight

All of the issue as—below—above—
 Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
 Though dread—this finite from that infinite.

WHY I AM A LIBERAL

[Browning never took an active part in politics, and this statement of his political faith, composed in response to an invitation from Mr. Andrew Reid, and published by him in a volume with the same title issued in 1885 in support of the then waning Liberal cause, appeared only a few months before he ceased to support the official Liberal party. The principles expressed in it, however, had no reference to the temporary policies of any party, and remained his principles to the end of his life.

The lines were reprinted in the Browning Society's *Papers*, 1885, p. 89; in *Sonnets of the Century*, edited by W. Sharp (1886); in Nicoll and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. i. (1895); in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 948; and in the Centenary Edition of the Poet's Works (1912), vol. ix., p. 351.]

"WHY?" Because all I haply can and do,
 All that I am now, all I hope to be—
 Whence comes it save from fortune setting
 free

Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
 God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
 Of prejudice, convention, fall from me, 40
 These shall I bid men—each in his degree

Also God-guided—bear, and gaily too?
 But little do or can the best of us:

That little is achieved through Liberty.
 Who, then, dares hold—emancipated thus—

His fellow shall continue bound? Not I
 Who live, love, labour freely, nor discuss

A brother's right to freedom. That is
 "Why."

LINES FOR THE TOMB OF LEVI LINCOLN THAXTER

[Mr. Thaxter, who was born at Waterford in Massachusetts in 1824 and died in 1884, was an enthusiastic student of Browning's poems, and in his later years gave readings from the poet's works. These lines have been printed in Mrs. Orr's *Life*, 1908, p. 335, and in the Cambridge (Boston, U. S. A.) Edition (1895), p. 948.]

THOU, whom these eyes saw never,—Say
friends true

Who say my soul, helped onward by my song,
Though all unwittingly, has helped thee too?

I gave but of the little that I knew:

How were the gift requited, while along

Life's path I pace, couldst thou make weak-
ness strong,

Help me with knowledge—for Life's Old—
Death's New!

R. B. to L. L. T., *April 19, 1885.*

EPPS

As far as can now be recollected, it was about the year 1884 that Robert Browning announced to Mrs. Edmund Gosse and Lady Alma-Tadema, whose maiden name was Epps, that he was proposing to write a poem about their "Kentish ancestor." They were not aware of any relationship with the hero, but Browning laughingly insisted that they must not throw any doubt upon the fact, because he proposed to endow them with this "ancestor." Shortly afterwards he showed them the MS. of the verses, which he did not treat as a serious specimen of his poetic art. It is not recollected what became of the MS., of which the ladies kept no copy; it was doubtless returned to Mr. Browning.

EDMUND GOSSE.

January 12, 1914.

[The MS. was included in the sale of the Browning Collections in 1913. The poem was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *New York Outlook*, October 1913. As a result of that publication, Mr. Edmund Gosse has very kindly given the above interesting facts in connection with this characteristic historical poem.]

Asks anyone—"Where's a tag for *steps*?"

I answer—"Waiting its time

10 Till somebody versed in the English tongue

Shall start at the challenge, cry 'unsung

Till now, and all for want of a rhyme,

Is the prowess of Kentish Epps?"

Two hundred and eighty years ago

Befell the siege of Ostend;

Epps soldiered it there: and, hew or hack
At his breast as the enemy might, his back

Got never a scratch: yet life must end
Somehow,—Epps ended—so!

He had lost an eye on the walls, look out

No longer could Epps: said he—

"Give me Saint George's cross—our flag

To carry: I can't see them—foes brag:

At all events they shall soon see me,
Knight and knave, lord and lout!"

"Epps got loose again!" yelled the curs:

"At him—the blind side best!

Together as one—in rush, on a heap,

Buffet the old maiméd bull! Fame's cheap

This morn for whoso has mind to wrest
30 Yon flag from his hold, win spurs!"

As a big wave bursts on a rock, broke they

On bannerman Epps: as staunch

The drowned rock stands, but emerging feels

Weeds late on its head lie loose at his heels,

So left bare, swirl-stript, root and branch,

Of his { band
company } stood—Epps laughed
gay:

"I with my flag—that's well, no fear

The colours stick to the staff:

But the staff 'tis a mere hand holds—lets fall 40

If there stab me or shoot one knave of them
all:

To hinder which game—"I hear Epps
laugh—

"Stick, flag, to a new staff—here!"

And off in a trice from the staff that's wood,

And on to a staff that's flesh,

Tears Epps and { ties } round
{ binds } tight }
about his breast

The flag in a red swathe: "Here's the vest

For my lifelong wear; at the foe afresh!

Flagstaff, show your hardihood!

Whereat, in a twinkling, man and horse 50

Went down—one, two and three,

And how many more? But they shot and
slashed

Two { bullets } have riddled, two sword-
{ balls } blades gashed

The staff through the flag, { leave } free
{ left }

To despoilers,—you think,—a corse?

No! Back from his slayers, staggeringly

But, staff-like, stout to the last,

Up to his mates—of the checked advance—

Reels Epps, his soul in his countenance,

As he falters "See! Flag to the staff sticks
fast,
And, flag saved, staff may die!"

And die did Epps, with his English round:
Not so the fame of the feat:
For Donne and Dekker, brave poets and rare,
Gave it honour and praise: and I join the pair
With heart that's loud though my voice
competes

As a pipe with their trumpet-sound!
January 6, 1886.

THE ISLE'S ENCHANTRESS

[Lines, on Felix Moscheles' painting called
"The Isle's Enchantress," given by Robert
Browning to the painter and printed in the
Pall Mall Gazette by the poet's permission.—
March 26, 1889.]

WIND wafted from the sunset, o'er the swell
10 Of summer's slumbrous sea, herself asleep
Come shoreward, in her iridescent shell
Cradled, the isle's enchantress. You who keep
A drowsy watch beside her,—watch her well!

UNFINISHED DRAFT OF A POEM WHICH MAY BE ENTITLED "ÆSCHYLUS' SOLILOQUY"

[At the sale of the Browning MSS. on
May 2, 1913, this MS. was catalogued as:

Lot 188. Browning (R) Auto. Draft of a
poem, in blank verse, 4 pp. 8vo, unfin-
ished and perhaps unpublished, appar-
ently intended for "Aristophanes'
Apology," but not used, beginning:

"I am an old and solitary man."

This description is correct in that the poem
had never been published, but it is evident
that it was not a draft for "Aristophanes'
Apology," but a soliloquy of the aged Æschylus,
just before the prophecy as to his death
was fulfilled by an eagle dropping a tortoise
upon his head. The poem was first printed
in the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *New York
Independent*, November 1913, strictly accord-
ing to the original MS., now in the British
Museum, as it reads with the poet's variants
and queries. In line 56 "Dephos" is ob-
viously a slip of the pen for "Delphos,"
and in line 59 "rush" seems the best inter-
pretation of a scarcely legible word, of which
the MS. contains many.]

I AM an old and solitary man
And now at set of sun in Sicily
I sit down in the middle of this plain
Which drives between the mountains and the
sea

Its blank of nature. If a traveller came
Seeing my bare bald skull and my still brows
And massive features coloured to a stone 20
The tragic mask of a humanity
Whose part is played to an end,—he might
mistake me
For some god Terminus set on these flats
Or broken marble Faunus. Let it be.
Life has ebbed from me—I am on dry ground—
All sounds of life I held so thunderous sweet
Shade off to silence—all the perfect shapes
Born of perception and men's images (im-
agery?)

Which thronged against the outer rim of earth
And hung with floating faces over it 30
Grow dim and dimmer—all the motions
drawn

From Beauty in action which spun audibly
My brain round in a rapture, have grown still.
There's a gap 'twixt me and the life once mine,
Now others' and not mine, which now roars off
In gradual declination—till at last
I hear it in the distance droning small
Like a bee at sunset. Ay, and that bee's hum
The buzzing fly and mounting of the grass
Cropped slowly near me by some straying 40
sheep

Are strange to me with life—and separate
from me

The outside of my being—I myself
Grow to silence, fasten to the calm
Of inorganic nature . . . sky and rocks—
I shall pass on into their unity
When dying down into impersonal dusk.

Ah, ha—these flats are wide!

The prophecy which said the house would fall
And thereby crush me, must bring down the
sky

The only roof above me where I sit 50
Or ere it prove its oracle to-day.

Stand fast ye pillars of the constant Heavens
As Life doth in me—I who did not die
That day in Athens when the people's scorn
Hissed toward the sun as if to darken it
Because my thoughts burned too much for
the eyes

Over my head, because I spoke my Greek
Too deep down in my soul to suit their case.
Who did not die to see the solemn vests 60
Of my white chorus round the thyme
Flutter like doves, and sweep back like a cloud
Before the shrill lipped people . . . but
stood calm

And cold, and felt the theatre wax hot
With mouthing whispers . . . the man
Æschylus

Is gray I fancy—and his wrinkles ridge
The smoothest of his phrases—or the times
Have grown too polished for this old rough
work—

We have no Sphynxes in the Parthenon
Nor any flints at Dephos—or forsooth,
I think the Sphynxes wrote this Attic Greek—70
Our Sophocles hath something more than this

Cast out on and their smile - I would
not die (?)
At this time by the crushing of a house
Who lived that Day out . . . I would go
to death
With voluntary and majestic steps
Jove thundering on the right hand. Let it be.

I am an old and solitary man
Mine eyes feel dimly out the setting sun
Which drops its great red fruit of bitterness
To-day as other days, as every day
o Within the patient waters. What do I say?
I whistle out my scorn against the sun
Who (knell) his trilogy morn, noon and night
And set this tragic world against the sun
Forgive me, great Apollo.—Bitter fruit
I think we never found that holy sun
Or ere with conjurations of our hands
Drove up the saltness of our hearts to it
A blessed fruit, a full Hesperian fruit
Which the fair sisters with their starry eyes
20 Did warm to scarlet bloom. O holy sun,
My eyes are weak and cannot hold thee
round!

But in my large soul there is room for thee—
All human wrongs and shames cast out from
it,—

And I invite thee, sun, to sphere thyself
In my large soul, and let my thoughts in white
Keep chorus round thy glory—Oh the days
In which I sate upon Hymettus hill
Ilissus seeming louder: and the groves
Of blessed olive thinking of their use
30 A little tunicked child and felt my thoughts (?)
Rise past the golden bees against thy face
Great sun upon the sea. The city lay
Beneath me like an eaglet in an egg,
The beak and claws shut whitely up in calm
And calm were the great waters—and the hills
Holding at arm's length their unmolten snows
Plunged in the light of heaven which trickled
back

On all sides, a libation to the world.

There I sate a child

40 Half hidden in purple thyme with knees
drawn up
By clasping of my little arms, and cheek
Laid slant across them with obtruded nose
And full eyes gazing . . . ay, my eyes climbed
up

Against the heated metal of thy shield
Till their persistent look clove through the fire
And struck it into manifold fires (?)
And opened out the secret of the night
Hid in the day-source Darkness mixed with
light.

Then shot innumerable arrows in my eyes
50 From all sides of the Heavens—so blinding
me—

As countless as the norland snowflakes fall
Before the north winds—rapid, wonderful,
Some shafts as bright as sun rays none times
drawn

Thro' the heart of the sun—some black as
night in Hell—

All mixed, sharp, driven against me! and as I
gazed

(For I gazed still) I saw the sea and earth
Leap up as wounded by the innumerable shafts
And hurry round, and whirl into a blot
Across which evermore fell thick the shafts
As norland snow falls thick before the wind 60
(?flakes fall)

Until the northmen at the cavern's mouth
Can see no pine tree through. I could see
nought,

No earth, no sea, no sky, no sun itself,
Only that arrowy rush of black and white
Across a surf of rainbows infinite

Drove {piercing?? } and blinding and as-
tonishing

And through it all Homerus the blind man
Did chant his vowel'd music in my brain.
And then it was revealed, it was revealed
That I should be a priest of the Unseen 70
And build a bridge of sound across the
straight

From Heaven to earth whence all the Gods
might walk

Nor bend it with their soles (?)

And then I saw the Gods tread past me slow
From out the portals of the hungry dark

And each one as he past, breathed in my face
And made me greater—First old Saturn came
Blind with eternal watches—calm and blind—

Then Zeus—his eagle blinking on his wrist
To his hand's rod of fires—in thunder rolls }
He glode on grandly—While the troop of 80
Prayers

Buzzed dimly in the {mist } of his light
shadow }
With murmurous sounds, and poor beseech-
ing tears.

And Neptune with beard and locks drawn
straight

As seaweed—ay and Pluto with his Dark
Cutting the dark as Lightning cuts the sun
Made individual by intensity.

And then Apollo trenching on the dusk
With a white glory, while the lute he bore
Struck on the air. 90

JOAN OF ARC AND THE KINGFISHER

[This and the following ten fragments of
verse are from MSS. in the autograph of
Robert Browning which were included in
the sale of the Browning Collections in 1913.
They are now printed for the first time, and
they may be said to reveal the poet in his-
torical, social, and humorous moods. The
following lines were written as a motto for a
picture painted by his son.]

Now, as she fain would bathe, one eventide,
—God's Maid, this Joan—from a pool's edge
she spied

That fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher
King:
And "Las," sighed she, "my Liege is such a
thing
As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place
Out of his whole wide France: were mine the
grace
To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"

"Joan of Arc," Canto I.

A SCENE IN THE BUILDING OF THE INQUISITORS AT ANTWERP

[Probably, like the last, a motto for a picture
by his son.]

THEREFORE the hand of God
Thy sentence with His finger
Hath written, and this tribunal
Consigneth it now straightway
Unto the secular arm.

REPLY TO A TELEGRAPHIC GREETING

BANCROFT, the message-bearing wire
Which flashes thy "All Hail" to-day,
Moves slower than my heart's desire
That, half what pen writes, tongue might say.

REPLIES TO CHALLENGES TO RHYME

IF ever you meet a rhinoceros
And a tree be in sight,
Climb quick! for his might
Is a match for the gods: he could toss Eros!

HANG your kickshaws and your made-dishes
Give me bread and cheese and radishes—
Even stalish bread and baddish cheese.

YOU may at Pekin as at Poggibonsi,
Instead of tricksy priest, a dodgy bonze see.

AH, massa! such a fiery oss
As him I rode at Timbuctoo!
Him would not suit a quiet boss!
Him kick, him rear, and him buck too!

VENUS, sea froth's child,
Playing old gooseberry,
Marries Lord Rosebery¹
To Miss de Rothschild!²

"HORNS make the buck" cried rash Burdett:
And then used speech befitting Timbuctoo:
"I would the horns of the creature met
I' the belly o' the king and so made him buck
too!"

¹ The marriage took place in 1878.

² Hannah, only daughter and heiress of
Baron Meyer de Rothschild, died 1890.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER

F. THEN, what do you say to the poem of
Mizpah?

D. An out and out masterpiece—that's
what it is, Pa!

THE DOGMA TRIUMPHANT

Epigram on the Voluntary Imprisonment
of the Pope as proving his infallibility.

DEAR HERRIES, let's hope, by impounding
your Pope,

We prove him infallible: *quare?*
Why, if he's in durance, who'll have the assur-
ance

To hint "*Papa potest errare*"?

ITALIA.

MISS ELIZABETH BARRETT BAR- RETT'S CRITICISMS ON SOME OF HER FUTURE HUSBAND'S POEMS (1845)

[From a MS., consisting of 56 pages, octavo,
found among her papers and included in the
sale of the Browning Collections, in 1913.
Some extracts were published in an article
"Of the Browning MSS." by Sir Frederic G.
Kenyon, K. C. B., in the *Cornhill Magazine*,
August 1913 (see page 1323).]

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

One who don't forego—
The after-battle work—

Strictly speaking, is not "doesn't": the right
abbreviation for only the third person? I
don't—he doesn't. "Who won't go" you
might say with accuracy, perhaps.

"Who's me"—it sounds awkward—
"what's I?" Yet I doubt altogether what
fine part of the dialogue all this is. Would
"what's me" sound less awkward? "What's
me"—"it's man in me." Yes, I think it
should be "what": for the relation of the
"it" afterwards.

Wast not enough that I must strive, I said
To grow so far familiar with all you
As find and take some way to get you—which
To do, an age seemed far too little.

There is something obscure, as it strikes
me in the expression of this. "As to find"
seems necessary to the construction. But
"all you" (besides) appears to lead the
thought from Eulalia, and you mean Eu-
lalia—I think. The reader will doubt here,
and have first and second thoughts

Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, nor a dish from table

Why such a dragging line just here? An oversight, probably. The second "nor a" might drop out to advantage.

THE FLOWER'S NAME

But this—so surely this met her eye

Is it hypercritical to complain of the "this eye"? I seldom like the singular "eye" and then, when it is a Spanish eye! The line is not a great favourite of mine altogether—and the poem *is*—and you see the least speck on a Venice glass: and if it is "*my fancy*" at least I speak it off my mind and have done with it. The beauty and melody we never shall have done with . . . none of us.

Flower, you Spaniard, look you grow not.

I inquire if it should not be "look *that* you grow not."

Mind the pink shut mouth opens never.

A clogged line—is it not? Difficult to read.

Roses, are you so fair after all?

And I just ask whether to put it in the affirmative thus—

Roses, ye are not so fair after all,

does not satisfy the ear and mind better? It is only *asking*, you know.

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

And under the arbutus and laurustine.

Are these pluralities quite correct? You know best. . . . And I doubt, at worst. If you wrote:

And under the arbutus and laurustine

it would seem to me a more *consistent* course . . . but I do not attempt even to decide.

Oh the droppings have played their tricks.

"Oh well have the droppings" you had written—and better written, I think.

While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
Clasps cracking, and covers suppling.

Or query . . . "while clasps were cracking and covers suppling." A good deal is to be said for the abrupt expression of the "text" . . . but the other is safer . . . and less trusting the reader. You will judge. Do you know that this poem is a great favourite

with me—it is so new, and full of a creeping, crawling grotesque life. Ah, but . . . do you know besides, it is almost reproachable in you to hold up John Knox to derision in this way!

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Morning, noon, eve and night.

Do you prefer this to

Morning, evening, noon and night—for rhythm, I mean?

As if thy voice to-day.

I think you must have meant to write

As well as if thy voice to-day.

Not that the short lines are not good in their places.

In heaven God said "nor day nor night
Brings one voice of my delight."

Taking this verse with the context, will you consider if "God said in heaven" is not of a simple and rather solemn intonation. The next line I do not like much. It might be more definite in meaning, I think.

Entered the empty cell

And played the craftsman well

Do you prefer to have short lines in this place, and why?

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh, remained the cell.

Is not something wrong here? If you mean that the flesh remained in the cell (named before), you do not say; and what else is said?

To the east with prayer he turned:
And in the angel burned.

I like and see plainly this burning in of the angel upon Theocrite as he looks to the east; but I doubt whether it will be as clear to all readers, you suggest it so very barely. Would not a touch or two improve the revelation? Do think.

Be again the boy all curled.

At any rate you will write "be then again" . . . will you not? But I doubt about the curled boy—any one "*becurled*" may be right—but a curled boy "*tout rond*" does strike me as of questionable correctness. Think, yourself. And I do ask you to think besides, whether a little dilation of the latter stanzas of this simple noble ballad would not increase the significance and effect of the whole. Readers will not see at a glance

all you have cast into it, unless you make more *surface*—it is my impression, at least.

THE TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S

Old Gandolf *came me in*, despite my care,
For a shrewd snatch, &c.

Is the "*came me in*" a correct expression . . . or, rather, does it *express*? . . . Does it not make the meaning hard to get at?

This is a wonderful poem, I think, and classes with those works of yours which show most power . . . most unquestionable genius in the high sense. You force your reader to sympathise positively in his glory in being buried! And what a grand passage that is, beginning—

And then, Lord, I shall lie through centuries
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass, &c.

THE LABORATORY

The soul from those strong grey eyes—say no.

Will you read this line with the context, and see if the rhythm is not perplexed in it?

Could I keep them but one half minute fixed,
she'd fall.

Why not "*she would fall*"?

Not that I bid you spare her pain.

And the rhythm here! Is it well done that it should change?

But brush the dust off me, *lest horror then*
springs.

The *lest* words are clogged, I think . . . and the expression seems forced.

ENGLAND IN ITALY. AUTUMN AT SORRENTO

While I lull you asleep till he's o'er
With his black in the skies.

I don't like "*he's o'er*" much, or at all perhaps. There is something to me weak and un-sirocco-like in the two contractions. Would

Till he carries
His black from the skies

be more *active*?

'Twas time, for your long dry autumn.

I just doubt if "*and dry*" might not improve the rhythm—doubt. Only if the emphasis is properly administered to "*long*," nothing of course is wanted—only, again, it is trusting to the reader!

What was in store.

Surely "*what change*" or "*what fate*" or some additional word should assist the rhythm in this place. The line is broken and short.

Touch the strange lamps.

I do like all this living description—living description which never lived before in poetry, and now will live always. These fishes have suffered no earth-change, though they lie here so grotesquely plain between rhyme and rhyme. And the grave fisher too—and the children "*brown as his shrimps*"!

You see round his neck.

Why not "*and you see round his neck*" . . . for rhythm? The line stops you: and you need not stop, when you are looking at him, to "*see round his neck*."

The treading of the grapes is admirable painting—That "*breathless he grows*" so true to life—and the effort to "*keep the grapes under*"—all admirable.

Back to my side, etc.

Is not some word, some dissyllable (as if you were to write "*back again*," &c.) wanted for rhythm—reading it with the preceding line?

Ever some new head and breast of them.

Should it not be written "*with ever some, etc.*"?

These mountains and their infinite movement are finely true.

How the soft plains they look on and love so
As they would pretend
Tower beneath them—(lower).

I do not see the construction. "*Is lower*" put here as a verb? and, if correctly, is it clearly, so put.

All's silent and grave.

Why not "*all is silent and grave*," without abbreviation? The rhythm gains by it, I think.

Greenly as ever.

Would not "*as greenly as ever*" take the rhythm on better?

Years cannot sever.

Quaere . . . "*and years*" or "*For years*."

Though the one breast high in the water
Quaere . . . "*bosom-high*" for rhythm.

When shall we sail there together.

You have effaced . . . "*Oh when shall we*." But the exclamation seems wanted for rhythm and expression—does it not?

Oh to sail round them, close over
The line is broken, I think. Should it not
either be

And oh, to sail round them,
or
Oh, to sail round and round them?

That ruffle the grey sea-water.

Why not "The grey ocean water" for rhythm?
All beautiful description.

The square black tower on the largest.

Did you write "*built on the largest*" be-
cause the eternal rhythm? How tired you
are! *as you said once to me.*

Strikes the great gloom.

For clearness, the personal pronoun is
wanted, I fancy. What "strikes"?

And now come out, you best one.

Quære, if it would not be well to repeat
the "come out"—

And now come out, come out, &c.
The priests mean to stamp. (stomp). R. B.

But is this word "stamp," and is it to rhyme
to "pomp." I object to that rhyme—I!!

I think it will strike you, when you come to
finish this unfinished poem, that all the rush-
ing and hurrying life of the descriptions of
it, tossed in one upon another like the grape
bunches in the early part, and not "kept
under" by ever so much breathless effort
on the poet's part, can be very little adapted
to send anybody to sleep . . . even if there
were no regular dinner in the middle of it all.
Do consider. For giving the *sense of Italy*,
it is worth a whole library of travel-books.

ITALY IN ENGLAND

A serene, noble poem this is—an heroic
repose in it—but nothing to imagine queries
out of, with whatever good will. I like the
simplicity of the great-heartedness of it
(though perhaps half Saxon in character),
with the Italian scenery all round—it is very
impressive.

I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his throat, and had my will.

After all the abjuring of queries, . . . is
not "had my will" a little wrong?—*I would*
what I would. There is a weakness in the
expression. Is there not?

PICTOR IGNOTUS—FLORENCE

like a thunder sunk
To the centre of an instant.

Is there not something obscure in the
expression? And it is all so fine here, that
you should let the reader stand up as straight
as he can to look round.

Or rapture drooped her eyes as when her brood
Pulled down the nesting dove's heart to its place.

A most exquisite image, and perfect in the
expression of it, I think.

Ever new hearts made beat and bosoms swell.

The construction seems to be entangled a
little by this line; and the reader pauses, he
clears meaning to himself. Why not clear it
for him by writing the line thus, for in-
stance?—

New hearts being made to beat, and breasts
to swell.

Or something better which will strike you.
Will you consider?

And thus to reach my home, where Age should
greet.

Should you not write it. . . . "Of reaching
thus my home," &c.? The construction
taking you back to what he dreamed of—
first he dreamed "of going," and then "of
reaching" his home, &c.—

And then not go to heaven, &c.

Fine, all this!

These men may buy us, sell us, &c.

Meaning pictures, by "*us*." But the reader
cannot see it until afterwards, and gets con-
fused. Is it not so? And, moreover, I do
think that by a touch or two you might give
a clearer effect to the previous verses about
the "gibing," &c. This poem is so fine, so
full of power, as to claim every possible atten-
tion to the working of it; it begins greatly,
grandly, and ends so—the winding up winds
up the soul in it. The versification too, is
noble—and altogether it classes with your
finest poems of the length. Does it not in
your own mind? I cannot tell you how much
it impresses mine.

THE CONFESSIONAL

With love and truth his brow was bright.

Looked bright—seemed so—should it not be,
for the meaning?

And lo!—there, smiled the father's face.

You know the best, of course; but to me, it
seems strange that she should have seen "the
father's face" at all in the shadow of that
scaffold.

definitely? And the rhythm cries aloud for it, it seems to me.

The vast, upright—

Quaere—"the upright" . . . for rhythm?

Then a sunbeam burst thro' the blind tent-roof
Showed Saul.

Now, will you think whether to enforce the admirable effect of your sudden sunbeam, this first line should not be rendered more rapid by the removal of the clogging epithet "blind"—which you repeat, too, I believe, farther on in the next page. What if you tried the line thus—

Then a sunbeam that burst through the tent-roof—
Showed Saul!

The manifestation in the short line appears to me completer, from the rapidity being increased in the long one. I only *ask*—It is simply an impression—I have told you how very fine I do think all this showing of Saul by the sunbeam—and how the more you come to see him, the finer it is. The "All heavily hangs," as applied to the king-serpent, you quite feel in your muscles.

PART II

The breaking of the band of lilies round the harp is a relief and refreshment in itself after that dreadful sight. And then how beautifully true it is that the song should begin so . . . with the sheep—

As one after one
Docile they come to the pen-door.

But the rhythm should not interrupt itself where the sheep come docilely—and is not a word wanted . . . a syllable rather . . . before that "Docile." Will you consider?

"The long grasses stifling the water."
How beautiful *that* is!

One after one seeks its lodging
As star follows star
Into the blue far above us,
—So blue and so far!

It appears to me that the two long lines require a syllable each at the beginning, to keep the procession of sheep uninterrupted. The ear expects to read every long and short line in the sequence of this metre as one long line. And where it cannot do so, a loss . . . an abruption . . . is felt—and there should be nothing abrupt in the movement of these pastoral, starry images. Do you think so? Is it not Goethe who compares the stars to sheep? Which you reverse here

PART III

Would we might help thee, my brother?

Why not "Oh, would," &c.—it throws a wail into the line, and swells the rhythm rightly, I think.

Next she whom we count
The beauty, the pride of our dwelling.

Why not "For the beauty"—or "As the beauty"?

But I stopped—for here, in the darkness
Saul groaned.

Very fine—and the preceding images full of beauty and characteristic life!—but in this long line, I just ask if the rhythm would gain by repeating "here" . . . thus—

But I stop here—for here in the darkness—
I just ask, being doubtful.

And the shaking of the tent from the shudder of the King. . . . What effect it all has!—and I like the jewels *waking* in his turban!

So the head—but the body stirred not.

If you wrote "So the head—but the body . . . *that* stirred not." Just see the context.

PART IV

The water was wont to go warbling
Softly and well.

Is not a syllable wanted at the beginning of the short line, to make the water warble softly . . . "right softly"?

And heard her faint tongue
Join in, while it could, to the witness.

Would "Joining in" be better to the ear?

And promise and wealth for the future.

I think you meant to write "the" before promise.

All I said about the poem in my note, I think more and more. Full of power and beauty it is,—and the conception, very striking.

E. B. B.

LURIA

ACT I, SCENE I

And vaunted Luria, Luria, who but he?

Whom but *him*—is it not?

This Moor of the bad faith, etc.

You say afterwards "The boy" and "the

stranger." Why not "This boy" and "this stranger" to carry forward the emphasis?

Which pass not, to yourself no question put.

You are fond of that *absolute* construction—but I think that sometimes it makes the meaning a little doubtful, and here there is some weakness from the inversion—you simply mean to say—"Which, do not pass without consideration." Then, the "*put*" is a bad word at all times to my ear.

Who think themselves your lords, such slaves art they?

Do you gain anything by the inversion? If you write "They are such slaves," do you not on the contrary gain in force of opposition, propriety of accent, and directness?

If as you bid this sentence they pronounce.

I cease to protest against the frequent inversions. Why not simply

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid?

Is there an objection? And it gives the effect, I think, of more impulse to these noble lines.

From the adoring army at his back

Query—from *that* adoring.
How I like

That thin flitting instantaneous steel
Against the blind bull front of a brute-force world?

It is a noble, expressive figure.

The description of Luria, too, admirable, or more. The "bared black arms held out into the sun from the tent opening"—what a picture!—and the laugh when the horse drops his forage—one *knows* Luria from henceforth.

Finely characteristic, the "You too have thought that."

Bury it . . . so I write the Signory.

I think you ought to have the preposition, either by "Bury it . . . write I to the Signory," or by putting the "to" into the text as it is, which would not ruffle the line too much.

And yet renounce the same, its hour gone by.

This eloquence of Braccio should be quite uninvolved—now should it not?—the connection of the two different sentences run clearly. Why not without the inversion?

Have ever proved too much for Florentines
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle, when the soldier's sword
Before the statish hand should sink its point,

And to the calm head, yield, the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition—

By shifting a few of the unimportant words so, you make it clear to run and read. And then by this shifting, you escape a rather questionable-looking opposition of "after" and "before," in "If virtue *after* virtue still have fallen *before* ambition."

So shall in him rebellion be less guilt,
And punishment for me the easier task.

I propose, still without the inversion—

So shall rebellion be less guilt in *him*,
And punishment the easier task for *me*.

Is not the emphasis better marked so?

Even these reasons while I urge them most—

This sounds to my ear *numerically* a weak line—this setting of "Even" as a dissyllable to open a line. "Why, even these reasons while I urge them most" would seem to give more freedom—Will you ring it, and later?

And which it took for earnest, &c.

Did you mean to write "All which"?
A slip of the pen perhaps?

Florence, to feel, in someone over me.

I quite understand—but the construction is not clear notwithstanding. A word will do it. And how fine and joyous and generous all this is of Luria! And this turning (afterwards) from the east's "drear vastness," and the acclimating of his soul to the west . . . noble it is, as he spoke it.

Yes, and how worth note, the truly great ones.

If you put "*that* those same great ones," you make it clearer. To apprehend the construction at once, the reader seeks a "that," it seems to me. The thought is excellent.

Convinces me . . . no child's play was the past.

Now if you wrote straightforwardly "Convinces me the past was no child's play"—is there an objection? Because there is a "most say" in the next line which occupies the precisely corresponding place to "child's play" and, so, jingles. Or is it a mere fancy of mine? And then, where nothing is gained by an inversion, the simpler form seems better.

Now make the duplicate, if this should fail,

Query, ". . . lest this should fail"?

"So plays,"—

Is the connection clear? Or the meaning even? Do you mean "So in plays." . . . "It is so in plays." But then you set your readers thinking . . . or rather looking through the dictionary.

ACT II

Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
Thro' all the safeguards, pass 'twixt all the
"play
Of arrowy wiles.

Does it not look, at least, like a confusion of metaphor? Though a person may be defended from a dagger, for instance, by a shower of arrows preventing the approach of an assassin, still it would simplify it, if you made the means of defence the sevenfold of a shield, or the subtle linkings of a mail. Is it worth a consideration?

Nor man's device, nor heaven to keep in mind
The wickedness forgot too soon.

Might it be written

Nor man's device, nor heaven's pure memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth too soon
But thy own heart, 'tis Hell, I trust, and thee
That firm thou keep, &c.

I do not understand exactly—" 'tis Hell and thee."—If you wrote

It is for hell and thee

To keep thy first course firmly to the end,

that would be clear—but would it be as you desire?

And this wild mass of rage that I prepare,
Luria, to launch against thee.

Do observe that this line and a half seem to have fallen down from the height of the argument into a strange place. It is a distracted construction . . . a little. Would it be straighter to be more coherent, if you wrote it somewhat thus:

turn aside

For gratitude a single step, or shame . . .
Grace thou this Luria, . . . this wild mass of
rage

I now prepare to launch against thyself, . . .
With other payment.

For the expected wreath the strange blow
came

Query—

The strange blow came for the expected
wreath.

When Florence on plain fact pronouncing so
Could to such actions such an end decree—
for mort le mort.

Tell me if an air of stiffness is not given by

such unnecessary inversions. You throw important words, too, at arm's length from their emphasis by it in this instance. Query—

Could judge such actions worthy of such an end.

not one

Possible way of getting his fair fame.

If you repeat "one,"

not one

One possible way of getting his fair fame;

you strengthen the line, do you not? It seems a willowy line otherwise.

Devoted brows are to be crowned no longer
Whom the smile paid, or word of praise, so
well.

It is not clear—will not be to the reader, I think—and a word or two more will ensure the desired purpose.

And, either way the fight's event he keeps.

It would be clearer and more unquestionable if you wrote it, perhaps.

And, let the fight end either way, he keeps.

This is the pettiest, paltriest, criticism of straws! But just these straws hide the path, with you, sometimes.

Pisa's last safeguard, all to intercept
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa.

Does the construction seem clear to yourself? Give us a little light.

Therefore should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust Florence was first to throw,
Made you her own not Pisa's, void the scale.

I dare to propose "*Which* made you her own not Pisa's, void the scale," because without it, the thread of meaning gets entangled.

And after all you will look gallantly

Found dead here with that letter in your
breast.

Very fine all this. I infinitely admire the whole interview between Luria and Fiburzio—nothing can be nobler. And the suppressed emotion tells.

That as they know my deeds, with me they
deal.

Why not "That as they know my deeds they deal with *me*"?

Oh this Luria! how great he is.
The palm trees and the pyramid o'er all. . .

Don't coop up such a wide desert line by the contracted "o'er," jingling with "all"

too. There is room for "over all" surely, said out broadly.

Treachery even—that such an one say.

The line seems to want strengthening by another syllable—"Of treachery even. . . ?" I only ask.

ACT III

No, did this urge me, that if judge I must.

You will wonder when I complain of darkness here—but certainly it is doubtfully worded—"Nor did this urge me."

Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,

Each reasoning it cost a brain to yield.

A noble first line and thought! And should you not interpose a word in the second? . . . "Each reasoning that it cost," &c., or if you wrote. . . "Each reasoning which to work out, cost a brain." Oh, it is only that the second line appears to sound feebly in comparison with the great thing it has to say, and also with the great line preceding it in utterance. And then I write down what comes into my head. Braccio's justification of Florence is (for the rest) very subtle and noble—one half forgives Braccio in it.

Who did the several acts yourselves gave names.

You mean "Gave names to." Then why not say "yourselves have named"? For clearness.

He goes on like the brute he is *against*
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.

Did you mean to write "against," and not rather "until"? The interest is carried nobly on through this act. Poor Luria!

ACT IV

Just where you left them blacks and whites
you'll find.

Why not, O you inverter?—

You'll find just where you left them, blacks
and whites.

I like the thought so much.

Your tricks with me too well succeed for that.

Query—Your tricks succeed with me too
well for that?

Is there an objection?

Duty to do O have I, and faith to keep.

Query—"Duty O have I to do." Puccio
speaks admirably yet like a soldier.

Set for your heart on stoutness ne'er so firm.

Which line I do not very much like. I don't like a firm stoutness, or a heart set firmly on stoutness . . . read it any way, and I set about objections.

Far too plain

Souls show themselves for men to choose and read.

It seems to me that the whole of this passage is somewhat diffusely given, and not distinctly. If this soul-reading is so easily achievable by boys, is it a *consequence* that Luria should be read wrong? Will you look and raise your wand once?

How thinkest thou? I have turned on them
their arms.

Is there an objection to making this clear by repeating the word "light"?

I have turned their light on *them*.

Then in the next line—

A transient thing was this our thirst of war.

If you wrote "They called our thirst of war a transient thing," you allow the reader to see at a glance what otherwise he will seek studiously. And so worthy of all admiration it is, this discourse of Husein's with his true doctrine, that "all work is fighting."

I proclaim

The angel in thee and reject the sprites.

A fine expression—the first; but why not write "spirits" at length?

Above them which still safelier bids them live.

Not a very favourite line perhaps of mine—but the "*weaklier*" must stand so near it, anyway. See below.

The word "break" too ends two several lines. My belief is that the whole passage will strike you as diffused and that you will teach it to coil up gathering strength. Domizia speaks her speech for the rest eloquently and well—she has her side of truth like the rest—and one feels for poor Luria so much the more—"Tis well for them to see—but him?" Poor Luria, how great and benignant in circumstances which makes misanthropes of other men! It is very fine . . . all to the end.

ACT V

Even affects the other course to choose.

I do not like the lines which begin "Even," making a dissyllable of it; they sound weak to me. But there is an objection here besides, because . . . observe the meaning . . . you do not mean to say "it even *affects* the other course," &c., but that "It affects even

the other *course*," &c. Do you see? I am always making that mistake myself, and everybody makes it . . . but there is a right and a wrong way after all. If you wrote "affects the other course even, left to choose" or "Affects even the other course we have to choose"—see?—I admire the dialogue here. It is suggestive and full besides.

And having disbelieved your innocence
How can she trust your magnanimity?

True and overcoming . . . and put so excellently well. The suggested pathos of this situation . . . how deep it is! Poor great Luria! I feel that I ought not to be able to count the trefoil when lifted to the summit of a mountain. But I do not like that little ending word to Puccio's speech, "You bid." "Bid"—the accent on "bid." Won't you say "you bid me," at least?

Being the thrice chivalric soul we know.

Is there an objection to saying . . . "He being the," &c., because there seems a weakness otherwise—to the ear, I mean.

As greater now who better still hath been.

Why not . . . "As greater now who hath been better still?" It is more natural, more clear, less stiff perhaps.

God's finger marks distinction all so fine, &c.

I admire this excellent true thought, which cannot be said better nor clearer.

Whose lambent play so all innocuous seemed.

Or . . . "Whose lambent play seemed so innocuous." Why object to natural sequence of words?

The everlasting minute of creation
Arrested.

Fine, that is. But I do not see what business "arrested" has—it *darkens*. I fancy "suspended" might convey the thought—might it not? But perhaps neither word is needed.

The play ends nobly, bearing itself up to its own height to the last . . . and leaving an impression which must be an emotion with all readers. Do think that just my first thoughts have been set down in these notes, and take them at their worth—or no-worth.

E. B. B.

ROBERT BROWNING'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING SOME OF HIS POEMS¹

By A. Allen Brockington

IN the early days of 1888 a club, styled
¹ Reprinted from the *Cornhill Magazine*,
March 1914.

"The Day's End Club," was formed in the city of Exeter, to study contemporary literature.

On February 18, 1889, a member read to the Club six of Robert Browning's shorter poems. He had paraphrased some, and his reading and notes provoked much discussion. The Rev. Sackville A. Berkeley, who had become acquainted with Browning at Oxford, offered to write to the poet, and state the difficulties of the members.

Answering the questions Browning wrote:

"I am delighted that you remember me, and have interest enough in my writings to put the questions concerning them which you obligingly do: I suppose the readiest way of answer will be to return them with what explanations occur to me duly appended."

This letter, dated February 22, 1889, was written at 29 De Vere Gardens. Though Browning was within a few months of his death at this time, the handwriting shows no trace of weakness. It is as firm and characteristic as in those of his earlier life.

The following is a copy of the paper. The poet's answers are italicised.

QUERIES

My Last Duchess

Was she in fact shallow and easily and equally well pleased with any favour: or did the Duke so describe her as a supercilious cover to real and well justified jealousy?

As an excuse—mainly to himself—for taking revenge on one who had unwittingly wounded his absurdly pretentious vanity, by failing to recognise his superiority in even the most trifling matters.

"Frà Pandolf by design":
By what design?

To have some occasion for telling the story, and illustrating part of it.

In a Gondola

Was she true, or in the conspiracy?

Out of it.

Earth's Immortalities

"Love":

Is the refrain—" (Love me for ever) " cynical, or sad, or trustful?

A mournful comment on the short duration of the conventional "For Ever!"

Parting at Morning

"And the need of a world of men for me":

Is this an expression by her of her sense of loss of him, or the despairing cry of a ruined woman?

Neither: it is his confession of how fleeting is the belief (implied in the first part) that such raptures are self-sufficient and enduring—as for the time they appear.

The question concerning "Parting at Morning" expresses a difficulty that has been felt by many readers. Indeed one would hardly conclude that Browning referred to the "Sun" in the third line:

And straight was a path of gold for him.

In the preface to his *Selections* published in 1872, Browning says:

A few years ago, had such opportunity presented itself, I might have been tempted to say a word in reply to the objections my poetry was used to encounter. Time has kindly co-operated with my disinclination to write the poetry and the criticism besides. The readers I am at last privileged to expect meet me fully half-way; and if, from the fitting stand-point, they must still "censure me in their wisdom," they have previously "awakened their senses that they may the better judge." Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconsciously careless, or perversely harsh.

The passages which follow will explain the questions and answers which were given by the poet.

MY LAST DUCHESS

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

"Frà Pandolf" by design: for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none put by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they

durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek:

. . . . She thanked men—good! but thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody's gift.

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

Love

So the year's done with!

20

(*Love me for ever!*)

All March begun with,

April's endeavour;

May-wreaths that bound me

June needs must sever;

Now snows fall round me,

Quenching June's fever—

(*Love me for ever!*)

PARTING AT MORNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,

And the sun looked over the mountain's rim: 30

And straight was a path of gold for him,

And the need of a world of men for me.

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

OF

SHORTER POEMS AND SONGS.

- A certain neighbour lying sick to death, 1221
 A King lived long ago, 180
 A Rabbi told me: On the day allowed, 1187
 A simple ring with a single stone, 1295
 Ah, but — because you were struck blind, 1271
 Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis! 1198
 Ah, did you once see Shelley plain, 258
 Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe,
 — no, 1259
 Ah, Love, but a day, 487
 Ah, the bird-like fluting, 1308
 All I believed is true! 338
 All I can say is — I saw it! 1071
 All June I bound the rose in sheaves, 252
 All service ranks the same with God, 176
 All's over, then: does truth sound bitter, 227
 All that I know, 245
 All the breath and the bloom of the year in the
 bag of one bee: 1295
 Among these latter busts we count by scores, 371
 And so you found that poor room dull, 1074
 "And what might that bold man's announce-
 ment be," 1222
 Anyhow, once full Dervish, youngsters came, 1219
 Ask I ride, as I ride, 221
 Ask not one least word of praise, 1233
 "As like as a Hand to another Hand!" 490
 At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time
 1317
 "Ay, but Ferishtah," — a disciple smirked, 1231
 Ay, this same midnight, by this chair of mine, 1246
 Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead! 229
 Boot, saddle, to horse, and away! 219
 But do not let us quarrel any more, 451
 But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
 517
 Christ God who savest man, save most, 334
 Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles, 467
 Could I but live again, 1070
 Crescenzo, the Pope's Legate at the High Coun-
 cil, Trent, 1298
 Dared and Done at last I stand upon the sum-
 mit, 1122
 Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave,
 257
 Dear, had the world in its caprice, 254
 Dervish — (though yet un-dervished, call him
 80, 1217
 Don, the divinest women that have walked, 1251
 Escape me? 254
 "Fame!" Yes, I said it and you read it, 1133
 Fear death? — to feel the fog in my throat, 516
 Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak! 360
 Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes,
 1224
 First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and
 rock! 1156
 Flower — I never fancied, jewel — I profess you!
 1072
 Fortù, Fortù, my beloved one, 343
 Frowned the Laird on the Lord: "So, red-
 handed I catch thee?" 1300
 Give her but a least excuse to love me! 185
 Going his rounds one day in Ispahan, 1218
 Good to forgive, 1122
 Grand rough old Martin Luther, 351
 Grow old along with me! 501
 Gr-r-r — there go, my heart's abhorrence! 224
 Had I but plenty of money, money enough and
 to spare, 232
 Hamelin Town's in Brunswick, 353
 Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes, 48
 He was the man — Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that
 swineherd's son, 1200
 "Heigho!" yawned one day King Francis, 339
 Here is a story shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks
 dead and gone, 1173
 Here is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts
 whelped, for den, 1158
 Here's my case. Of old I used to love him, 1071
 Here's the garden she walked across, 222
 Here's to Nelson's memory! 222
 Here was I with my arm and heart, 497
 High in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad tri-
 umph, behold us! 1200
 Hist, but a word, fair and soft! 250
 How I lived, ere my human life began, 1314
 How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide, 1226
 How strange! — but, first of all, the little fact, 1277
 How very hard it is to be, 428
 How well I know what I mean to do, 245
 I and Clive were friends — and why not?
 Friends! I think you laugh, my lad, 1174
 I am a goddess of the ambrosial courts, 440
 I am a painter who cannot paint, 184
 I am indeed the personage you know, 1078
 I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave! 446
 I could have painted pictures like that youth's,
 445
 I dream of a red-rose tree, 256
 I hear a voice, perchance I heard, 28
 I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives, 471
 I know there shall dawn a day, 1315
 I leaned on the turf, 488
 I — "Next Poet?" No, my hearties, 1066
 I only knew one poet in my life, 438
 I said — Then, dearest, since 'tis so, 352
 I send my heart up to thee, all my heart, 346
 I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he, 220
 I've a Friend, over the sea, 341
 I will be happy if but for once, 1294
 I will be quiet and talk with you, 488
 I wish that when you died last May, 516
 I wonder do you feel to-day, 250
 If a stranger passed the tent of Hósey, he cried
 "A chur's!" 1178
 If one could have that little head of hers, 518

If you and I could change to beasts, what beast
should either be? 1295
Is all our fire of shipwreck wood, 487
It happened thus: my slab, though new, 1297
It is a lie — their Priests, their Pope, 226
It once might have been, once only 577
It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance, 1256
It was roses, roses, all the way, 333

June was not over, 252
Just for a handful of silver he left us, 220

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs, 441
Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King, 210
King Charles, and who'll do him right now? 210
"Knowledge deposed, then!" — groaned whom
that most grieved, 1232

Last night I saw you in my sleep, 1296
Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone
too far, 256
Let's contend no more, Love, 228
Let us begin and carry up this corpse, 366
"Look, I strew beans," 1234

Man I am and man would be, Love — merest
man and nothing more, 1222
May I print, Shelley, how it came to pass, 1083
Morning, evening, noon and night, 336
Moses the Meek was thirty cubits high, 1214
My father was a scholar and knew Greek, 1312
My first thought was, he lied in every word, 375
My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when
a youngster long ago, 1153
My heart sank with our Claret-flask, 222
My love, this is the bitterest, that thou, 249

Nay but you, who do not love her, 228
Nay, *that*, Furini, never I at least, 1264
Never any more, 255
Never the time and the place, 1215
Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-
west died away, 239
"No, boy, we must not" — so began, 1086
No, for I'll save it! Seven years since, 538
No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and
talk, 456
No protesting, dearest! 1075
Not with my Soul, Love! — bid no Soul like
mine, 1237
Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this
once! 510
Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly, 225

O the old wall here! How I could pass, 1060
O worthy of belief I hold it was, 1191
Of the million or two, more or less, 337
Oh but it is not hard, Dear? 1109
Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to
find! 233
Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
490
Oh, Love — no, Love! All the noise below,
Love, 1240
Oh, the beautiful girl, too white, 491
Oh, to be in England, 230
Oh, what a dawn of day! 230
Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder,
1220
On the first of the Feast of Feasts, 539
On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred
ninety-two, 1076
One day it thundered and lightened, 1200
Only the prism's obstructions shows aright, 516

Others may need new life in Heaven, 1295
Out of the little chapel I burst, 415
Out of your whole life give but a moment! 1294
Overhead the tree-tops meet, 193
Over the hall of it, 1070
Over the sea our galleys went, 51

Petrus Aponensis — there was a magician! 1180
Plague take all your pedants, say I! 223
Pray, Reader, have you eaten ortolans, 1217

Query: was ever a quainter, 1060
Quoth an inquirer, "Praise the Merciful! 1224
Quoth one: "Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage,
1228

Room after room, 254
Round the cape of a sudden came the sea, 228
Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
1218

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell,
ere thou speak, 239
Savage I was sitting in my house, late, 974
See, as the prettiest graves will do in time, 227
Shall I sonnet sing you about myself? 1068
She should never have looked at me, 226
Sing me a hero! Quench my thirst, 1166
So far as our story approaches the end, 351
So, friend, your shop was all your house! 1068
So, I shall see her in three days, 254
"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?
1295

So, the head aches and the limbs are faint, 1226
So, the three Court-ladies began, 1298
So, the year's done with! 228
Solomon King of the Jews and the Queen of
Sheba Balkis, 1197
Some people hang portraits up, 518
Stand still, true poet that you are! 258
Still ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
489
Still you stand, still you listen, still you smile! 1072
Stop, let me have the truth of that! 405
Stop playing, poet! May a brother speak? 438
Stop rowing! This one of our bye-cannals, 1301
Such a starved bank of moss, 1133
Suppose that we part (work done, comes play),
1215
[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene, 503

Take the cloak from his face, and at first, 257
That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers, 253
That second time they hunted me, 342
That's my last Duchess painted on the wall, 334
That was I, you heard last night, 251
The fancy I had to-day, 932
The grey sea and the long black land, 228
The Lord, we look to once for all, 368
The morn when first it thunders in March, 233
"The Poet's age is sad: for why?" 1293
"The poets pour us wine —" 1091
The rain set early in to-night, 375
The swallow has set her six young on the rail, 487
The year's at the spring, 180
There is nothing to remember in me, 491
There's a palace in Florence, the world knows
well, 372
There's a woman like a dewdrop, 292
There's heaven above, and night by night, 445
There they are, my fifty men and women, 472
"They tell me, your carpenters," quoth I to my
friend the Russ, 1150
This is a spray the Bird clung to, 251

- This now, this other story makes amends, 1202
 This strange thing happened to a painter once,
 1304
 This was my dream: I saw a Forest, 1207
 Thus the Mayne glideth, 50
 Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke,
 1103
 'Twas Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsum-
 mer's Day, 1166
- Up jumped Tokay on our table, 222
- Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity! 454
 Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed
 with despair, 1230
- Wanting is — what? 1104
 We two stood simply friend-like side by side, 1297
 We were two lovers; let me lie by her, 1072
 What a pretty tale you told me, 1151
 What girl but, having gathered flowers, 1295
 What, he on whom our voice unanimously ran,
 1299
 What, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal, 1229
 What is he buzzing in my ears? 516
 What it was struck the terror into me? 1310
- What's become of Waring, 348
 When I vexed you and you chid me, 1228
 When these parts Tiberius, — not yet Cæsar, —
 travelled, 1187
 Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
 229
 "Why from the world," Ferishtah smiled,
 "should thanks," 1240
 "Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best, 512
 Will you hear my story also, 1194
 Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!
 1219
 Woe, he went galloping into the war, 1294
 Would it were I had been false, not you! 493
 Would that the structure brave, the manifold
 music I build, 499
- Yet womanhood you reverence, 1301
 "You are sick, that's sure" — they say, 1173
 You blame me that I ran away? 1301
 You groped your way across my room i' the drear
 dark dead of night, 1220
 You in the flesh and here, 1296
 You know, we French stormed Ratisbon, 333
 Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees, 238
 You'll love me yet! — and I can tarry, 191
 You're my friend, 356

GENERAL INDEX.

ABBAS, Shah	1210	Cristina and Monaldeschi	1108
Abd-el-Kadr, Through the Metidja to	221	Croisic, The Two Poets of	1133
Abt Vogler	490		
Adam, Lilit, and Eve	1200	DANIEL Bartoli, Parleyings with	1251
After	257	"De Gustibus ——"	238
Agamemnon of Æschylus, The	1095	Deaf and Dumb; a Group by Woolner	510
Agricola (Johannes) in Meditation	445	Death in the Desert, A	503
Amphibian	932	Development	1312
Andrea del Sarto	451	Dis aliter visum; or, le Byron de nos	
Another Way of Love	252	Jours	495
Any Wife to Any Husband	240	Doctor ———	1187
Apollo and the Fates: A Prologue	1241	Dodington (George Bubb), Parleyings	
Apparent Failure	538	with	1259
Appearances	1074	Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis	802
Arcades Ambo	1301	Donald	1104
Aristophanes' Apology	575	Dramatic Idyls. First Series	1153
Artemis Prologises	440	Dramatic Idyls. Second Series	1173
Asolando	1293	Dramatic Lyrics	219
At the "Mermaid"	1066	Dramatic Romances	333
Avison (Charles), Parleyings with	1277	Dramatis Personæ	487
		Dreams, Bad	1206
BAD Dreams	1296	Drinks, Nationality in	222
Balaustion's Adventure; including A		Druses, The Return of the	262
Transcript from Euripides	541	Dubiety	1204
Balcony, In a	475	Duchess, My Last	334
Baldinucci (Filippo) on the Privilege of		Duchess, The Flight of the	356
Buria!	1086		
Bartoli (Daniel), Parleyings with	1251	EAGLE, The	1217
Bean-Feast, The	1209	Earth's Immortalities	227
Bean-Stripe (A): also, Apple-Eating	1234	Easter-Day	428
Beatrice Signorini	1304	Echetos	1173
Before	356	England, The Italian in	342
Bernard de Mandeville, Parleyings with	1246	Englishman (The) in Italy	347
Bifurcation	1072	Epistle (An) containing the Strange	
Bishop Blougram's Apology	456	Medical Experience of Karshish,	
Bishop (The) orders his Tomb at Saint		the Arab Physician	22
Praxed's Church	454	Eurydice to Orpheus; a Pictur	
Blot in the 'Scutcheon, A	287	Leighton	7
Book (The) and the Ring	806	Evelyn Hope	
Boot and Saddle	219		
Boy (The) and the Angel	336	FACE, A	8
Bratts, Ned	1166	Failure, Apparent	338
By the Fire-side	245	Family, The	122
		Fates, Apollo and the	141
CALIBAN upon Setebos; or, Natural		Fears and Scruples	1071
Theology in the Island	512	Ferishtah's Fancies	1217
Camel-Driver, A	1226	Fine at the Fair	932
Camels, Two	1228	Filippo Baldinucci: a the Privilege of	
Campagna, Two in the	250	Burial	1086
Cardinal and the Dog, The	1298	Flight of the Duchess The	356
Cavalier Tunes	219	Florence, Old Pictures in	234
Cenciaja	1083	Flower's Name, The	222
Charles Avison, Parleyings with	1277	Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment	1308
Cherries	1229	Forgiveness, A	1078
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower		Fra Lippo Lippi	446
came"	375	Franceschini, Count Guido	726
Christmas-Eve	415	Francis Furini, Parleyings with	1264
Christopher Smart, Parleyings with	1256	French Camp, Incident of the	333
Cleon	407	Fuseli, Mary Wollstonecraft and	1109
Clive	1173	Fust and his Friends: An Epilogue	1283
Colombe's Birthday	306		
Confessional, The	226		
Confessions	510	GALUPPI'S, A Toccata of	233
Count Gismond	334	Garden Fancies	222
Count Guido Franceschini	726	George Bubb Dodington, Parleyings with	1259
Cristina	226	Gerard de Lairese, Parleyings with	1271

"Ghent to Aix, How they brought the Good News from"	220	Martin Relph	11
Girl. A Pearl, a	1205	Martin's (St.) Summer	10
Giuseppe Caponsacchi	752	Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli	11
Give a Rouse	210	Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha	2
Glove, The	330	May and Death	5
Gold Hair: a Story of Pornic	491	Meeting at Night	2
Gondola, In a	346	Melon-Seller, The	12
Grammarians' Funeral, A	366	Memorabilia	2
Guardian-Angel, The. A Picture at Fano	257	Men and Women	4
Guido	866	Mesmerism	12
HAKKADOSH, Jochanan	1202	Mihrab Shah	12
Halbert and Hob	1158	Misconceptions	2
Half-Rome	607	Monaldeschi, Cristina and	11
Heretic's Tragedy, The	368	Muckle-Mouth Meg	13
Hervé Riel	1076	Mulëykeh	11
Hohenstiel-Schwangau (Prince), Saviour of Society	907	My Last Duchess	3
Holy-Cross Day	360	My Star	2
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad	239	NATIONALITY in Drinks	2
Home-Thoughts, from the Sea	239	Natural Magic	10
House	1068	Ned Bratts	110
Householder, The	972	Net, The Pope and the	12
How it Strikes a Contemporary	438	Never the Time and the Place	12
"How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"	220	Now	12
Hugues (Master) of Saxe-Gotha	250	Numpholeptos	10
Humility	1295	OLD Pictures in Florence	2
"IMPERANTE Augusto natus est —"	1310	One Way of Love	2
In a Balcony	475	One Word more. To E. B. B.	4
In a Gondola	346	Other Half-Rome, The	6
In a Year	255	PACCHIAROTTO (Of) and how he Worked in Distemper	10
In Three Days	254	Painter, The Lady and the	13
Inapprehensiveness	1297	Pambo	12
Incident of the French Camp	333	Pan and Luna	11
Inn Album, The	1022	Paracelsus	12
Instans Tyrannus	337	Parleyings with Certain People of Impor- tance in their Day	12
Italian (The) in England	342	Parleyings with Bernard de Mandeville	12
Italy, The Englishman in	343	Parleyings with Daniel Bartoli	12
Ivan Ivanovitch	1159	Parleyings with Christopher Smart	12
Ixion	1200	Parleyings with George Bubh Dodington	12
JAMES Lee's Wife	487	Parleyings with Francis Furini	12
Jochanan Hakkadosh	1202	Parleyings with Gerard de Lairese	12
Jocoseria	1104	Parleyings with Charles Avison	12
Johannes Agricola in Meditation	445	Parting at Morning	2
Juris Doctor Johannes-Baptista Bottinius	822	Patriot, The	3
KING Victor and King Charles	106	Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession Pearl, a Girl, A	12
LA Saisiaz	1122	Pheidippides	11
Laboratory, The	225	Pictor Ignotus	4
Lady and the Painter, The	1301	Pictures (Old), in Florence	2
Lairresse (Gerard de), Parleyings with	1271	Pied Piper of Hamelin, The — A Child's Story	3
Last Duchess, My	334	Pietro of Abano	118
Last Ride Together, The	352	Pillar at Sebzevar, A	12
Last Word, A Woman's	228	Pippa Passes	17
Life in a Love	274	Pisgah Sights, I.	10
Light Woman, A	351	Pisgah Sights, II.	10
Likeness, A	518	Plot-Culture	12
Lippo Lippi, Fra	446	Poetics	12
Lost Leader, The	220	Pompilia	7
Lost Mistress, The	227	Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice	13
Love among the Ruins	229	Pope, The	8
Love in a Life	254	Pope and the Net, The	12
Lover's Quarrel, A	230	Popularity	2
Luria	379	Porphyria's Lover	37
MAGICAL Nature	1072	Pretty Woman, A	2
Mandeville (Bernard de). Parleyings with	1246	Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society	0
Marching Along	219	Prospect	5
		Protus	3

QUARRELL, A LOVER'S	230	Solomon and Balkis	1197
RABBI BEN EZZA	501	Song	228
Red Cotton Night-cap Country, or Turf and Towers	973	Sordello	103
Ralph, Martin	1153	Soul's Tragedy, A	402
Raphael	1314	Spanish Cloister, Soliloquy of the	224
respectability	254	Speculative	1205
Return (The) of the Druses	262	Star, My	245
Reverie	1315	Statue (The) and the Bust	372
Ring (The) and the Book —		Strafford	70
I. The Ring and the Book	640	Summum Bonum	1205
II. Half-Rome	667	Sun, The	1222
III. The Other Half-Rome	685	TERTIUM Quid	706
IV. Tertium Quid	706	Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr	221
V. Count Guido Franceschini	726	Time's Revenges	341
VI. Giuseppe Caponsacchi	752	Voceata of Galuppi's, A	233
VII. Pimpia	779	Too Late	497
III. Domnus Hyacinthus de Arch- angels	802	"Transcendentalism"	438
IX. Juris Doctor Johannes Baptista Bottinius	822	Tray	1166
X. The Pope	840	Tripoli, Rudel to the Lady of	471
XI. Guido	866	Turf and Towers, Red Cotton Night- cap Country, or	973
XII. The Book and the Ring	890	Twins, The	351
Roses, Women and	256	Two Camels	1228
Rosny	1204	Two in the Campagna	250
Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli	471	Two Poets of Croisic, The	1133
SAINT MARTIN'S SUMMER	1075	Tyrannus, Instans	337
Saiskiz, La	1122	VILLA, Up at a — Down in the City	232
Saul	230	Vogler, Abt	499
Saxe-Gotha, Master Hugues of	250	WARING	348
Scruples, Fears and	1071	Which?	1208
Sebzeyar, A Pillar at	1232	White Witchcraft	1205
Serenade (A) at the Villa	251	Wife (Any) to Any Husband	240
Shah Abbas	1210	Wollstonecraft (Mary) and Fuseli	1109
Shop	1068	Woman's Last Word, A	228
Sibaudus Schaafburgensis	223	Women and Roses	256
Sludge (Mr.), "The Medium"	510	Worst of It, The	493
Smart (Christopher), Parleyings with	1250	YEAR, In a	255
Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister	224	Youth and Art	512

ANDERSON COLLEGE,
LIBRARY.
ANDERSON, INDIANA

ANDERSON COLLEGE
LIBRARY
ANDERSON, INDIANA

